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# THE IMPACT OF THE GLOBAL:

## an urban theology

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Laurie Green, Bishop of Bradwell  
Foreword by Professor David Ford

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Foreword by Prof. David Ford

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## FOREWORD

I read this global urban theology by Laurie Green a couple of weeks after returning from my first visit to Shanghai. I had been driven round that city and taken part in intensive conversations with dozens of Chinese from many walks of life. I suspect it is the biggest urban development in world history, and its horizon is straightforwardly global. I had wrestled with a flood of questions about how to describe it, how to react to it, how to see it in relation to God and the Gospel. Laurie's booklet has been just the right stimulus to begin to make some sort of sense of it. He gives some historical perspective and brings to bear his decades of combining sustained reading in many disciplines with deep personal involvement. Above all he really does theology that is both thoughtful and practical. There is a lively 'in your face' urgency that matches the extraordinary reality of twenty-first century cities. He is sensitive to the centres of vitality and of suffering and to how closely they are related. This is a piece that will inform and inspire.

I hope its impact travels round the Anglican Communion too. I attended the 'fringe meeting' of urban bishops at the 1998 Lambeth Conference without a lot of expectations. In fact it set up the Anglican Urban Network after a fascinating set of exchanges as bishops from American, Indian, Brazilian, Australian, British, African and other cities shared their situations. It was also one of the most vivid illustrations of the potential of a global communion today to be open to developments that were unimaginable when it was founded.

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# ***... Impact of the Global: An Urban Theology***

## **INTRODUCTION**

✓ In 1950 just twenty five per cent of the world's population lived in towns and cities.<sup>1</sup> In the first decade of the twenty-first century it will reach that powerfully symbolic figure of fifty per cent. What we have now to reckon with is that by the year 2010 it is estimated that no less than seventy five per cent of the world's population will be urban.<sup>2</sup> The next Lambeth Conference will have to attend to this profound change if the Anglican Communion is not to miss the real challenge of the new millennium.

✓ Other disciplines and interest groups have already begun to grapple with the new phenomena. Sociologists, politicians, economists, geographers, financiers, aid agencies, transnational companies, are all researching and redefining their strategies accordingly.<sup>3</sup> But is the Church anywhere up to speed?

Theology that engages with the urban community is as old as the Bible itself. The biblical text draws our attention repeatedly to the strategic significance of cities, each seen as a place of influence, symbolic of concerns, social power and ethical values – witness Damascus, Rome, or Babylon. The Bible even at

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<sup>1</sup> Only London and New York had more than eight million inhabitants in 1950.

<sup>2</sup> David Clark, *Urban World/ Global City* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 47-48. It is however notoriously difficult to forecast population since many countries have no present reliable data from which to project. Wichmann states that not till 2005 will half the population be urban but suggests that ninety percent of future population increase will be urban and that in 2025 four-fifths of all city dwellers will be living in developing countries. See R. Wichmann, 'The Link between Poverty, Environment and Development, Countdown to Istanbul', in *Habitat* No.5, November.

<sup>3</sup> Commentary on urban issues is offered by the journal *CITY - analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy action*, published by Carfax Publishing. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/default.html>



times addresses the cities in the vocative, as corporate personalities (O Samaria! Nineveh! Jerusalem!) and recognises that the world's issues are somehow concentrated within them. They are places where spiritual battles must be joined, where the poor suffer, where sin and bloodshed are concentrated and where pride is manifest. They must be addressed in their own right since they are structural foci of the principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12). The need of the city is palpable, prompting Jesus to weep for the City of Jerusalem – for ‘you did not recognise your time when it had come.’ (Luke 19:44).

Again, the Bible often sees the city as central to the Divine strategy – ‘Today in the City of David a saviour has been born’. (Luke 2:11). And at a significant point in the saviour's strategy, Jesus ‘sets his face to go to Jerusalem.’ (Luke 9:51). It is in that city that the Holy Spirit comes upon the Church at Pentecost after it had been bidden to ‘stay in the city’ (Luke 24:49). Following the same urban strategy through which the Roman Empire itself managed its imperial mission, the early Christian Church likewise based its mission strategy upon the urban centres – recent research indicating that it was probably in the poor tenement shop-fronts that a network of urban eucharistic communities developed.<sup>4</sup>

In the latter half of the twentieth century urban realities have proved a prime focus for much exciting and dynamic urban theology. This has led theological urban practitioners to look at and struggle with the complexities of context and the built environment, to look from the liberation perspective of the down-trodden, and to listen to the voice of the faithful poor in what may be called ‘implicit’ or ‘folk’ religion.<sup>5</sup> We have observed the inter-faith inclusivity of prayer, and experienced the power of eucharistic solidarity in committed urban congregations. We have struggled with the dynamics of political power and powerlessness. We have asked what it means to meet Jesus in the city. We have been challenged by the un-Godly exclusions of

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Jewett, ‘Tenement Churches and Pauline Love Feasts’ in *Paul: the Apostle to America* (Westminster, John Knox 1994).

<sup>5</sup> For a useful overview see the work of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Urban Theology Group: Michael Northcott ed., *Urban Theology, A Reader* (London: Cassell 1998) & Peter Sedgwick, ed., *God in the City* (London: Mowbray 1995).

racism, sexism and poverty. And, amidst all this we have sought to witness to the faith that drives us, in appropriate word and in sacramental action. We have explored urban issues through engagement and have concluded that even the so-called marginality of the outer deprived housing estates or projects<sup>6</sup> is not marginality at all, but a symptom integral to the whole, indeed at the very heart of the processes of world urbanization!

In some ways however our concentration on the internal dynamics of the urban scene, and in particular its deprivations, has blinded us to the importance of the inter-relationships between the inner-cities, the suburban and the rural, between the city and its peripheral hinterland. Recent work on understanding cities shows that a city is often inter-dependent with its surrounding region and that we simply must not think that we understand one without the other. In the past, we have not reckoned with the complexity of these relationships nor addressed the ways in which the internal dynamics of a city are so largely related to external factors such as the situation of its food producers in the countryside both near and far, or its national and international relationships with other cities and zones of manufacture and decision-making. It is our new awareness of the processes of globalization which brings many of these matters so aggressively to our attention and demands of us that we look again from these other perspectives to reassess our theology of the urban, the suburban and the rural. In the past our urban theology simply did not address these matters with sufficient rigour and even led to the building up of a false antagonism between urban and rural theologians, neither fully appreciating how the symptoms which they were observing in their own distinct contexts were in fact diverse symptoms of the same global or national processes.

✓ In the mid nineteen-sixties it was cool theologically to talk of the city in glowing terms. Harvey Cox's *Secular City*<sup>7</sup> extolled the virtues of the modern city with such an optimism that he looked upon the glass and concrete edifices of the throbbing centre of the metropolis as if this were the New Jerusalem, a

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<sup>6</sup> See Laurie Green, *The Challenge of the Estates, Strategies and Theology for Housing Estates Ministry* (London: Urban Bishops' Panel & NECN 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Secular City. Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan 1967).

promised vehicle of plenty and un-alienated productivity - a grace from heaven. He is right even now to remind us that our cities are lively miracles of organisation and inter-relationship on a vast scale. Cultural, productive and political energies abound in the cities. Sometimes indeed we find it hard to understand how our modern cities can be at all sustainable and yet even our most problematic cities are proving extraordinarily viable and vital. But as the decades go by, this brave optimism remains in the hearts of very few, as yet more become aware of the realities of heavy urbanization in the expanding cities of the developing world.<sup>8</sup> From India, KC Abrahams paints the picture of present-day Bangalore which in only thirty years has been transformed from a pensioners' paradise into an overloaded and overcrowded megacity.

Today things have changed. Bangalore is becoming a megacity with high-rise buildings, heavy traffic and high-tech industries. The climate is no longer comfortable, population has multiplied ten times in fifty years, and gardens have been turned into concrete jungles. Hoardings everywhere, with advertisements of consumer durables, disfigure the city skyline. A large influx of industrialists from different parts of India have found this place ideal for their lucrative business. It is estimated that there are about 135 multinational companies operating in the city today; among them a considerable number deal with computer technology. India's largest export of computer software is from this city. The roads have not expanded to take the mounting traffic of all kinds of vehicles. The basic amenities of water and electricity are woefully inadequate, and the pollution in the atmosphere is considerably high in this fastest growing city in the

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<sup>8</sup> I am uncomfortable with the terms 'developing' and 'developed' as they relate to the ever-changing cities of our world. Indeed Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali has commented to me that one of the problems with some of the expanding mega-cities of the Southern hemisphere is that they have 'over-developed'! We cannot refer simply to Western cities or to cities of the Northern hemisphere either, since some of the rich modern cities are found in Australia and the South. The term, the 'Third World' has been eclipsed by the demise of the first-second world merger after the fall of the Berlin Wall. There seem to be no readily-understood terms and so I have bowed reluctantly to current usage in this paper and speak of 'developed' and 'developing' or 'North' and 'South' as short-hand for a very complex phenomenon.



country... The large number of people who come into the city are drawn from all regions and from all religions. Some are affluent, some are job seekers and a large proportion are casual labourers from villages, recruited for the growing construction activities, all of them ending up in our slums. The slum population has risen sharply.<sup>9</sup>

A city such as Bangalore now experiences new intensities of interfaith rivalry and conflict, the marginalization of children and women, the ecological crisis of pollution, a palpable fear in the minds of the rich as they lock themselves away in their gated communities, and the daily violation of the poor. The optimism of Harvey Cox - the modern city as the New Jerusalem - seems so out of kilter with our present experience where the newly-expanding cities appear more akin to that other city of the Book of Revelation, Babylon the Harlot. It is she who becomes 'drunk on the blood of the martyrs' (Revelation 17:6) all too vividly reminding us of the death of the street children of South American mega-cities and the drug-ridden squatter camps surrounding so many of our developing cities.<sup>10</sup>

And so it is that our theologies of the urban have become ever more ambivalent, demonstrating our differing experiences of the outcomes of the urban processes. The story of urbanization is a tale of complex relationships and human achievement at odds with the horror of human cost and environmental collapse.

We have already mentioned some of the ways the Bible tells the story of the city, but others tell the story in different ways. My intention in this paper is therefore now to describe some of those ways that the story is told from various disciplines, before returning to my own theological perspective upon the global urbanization which we are now experiencing.

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<sup>9</sup> K.C. Abraham, 'Globalisation: A Gospel and Cultural Perspective' in *International Review of Mission*. Vol. 85 No 336.85-92 See also 'The Hot New Tech Cities' in *Newsweek*, (Nov 9, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> It is estimated that about two hundred of the five hundred *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro are dominated by drug gangs: see *World Urbanization, Understanding Global Issues*. #9/92. (Berlin: Cornelesen Verlag 1992) p.5.

# I. THE FACTS OF GLOBAL URBANIZATION

## 1. Theories of urban formation

In the 1920s and 30s the Chicago School of sociology (amongst whom we number significant scholars such as Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, Harvey Zorbaugh, and Louis Wirth) taught us that cities invariably develop a central core zone or business district with concentric circles or zones surrounding that core, each with its own distinct function and supporting rôle. Subsequent studies of the western suburbanisation of the 60s and 70s and the demise and decay of the city centres of the western world have led us to suppose that whilst the cities of the developed world are now in the final stages of an inevitable cycle of urbanization, the new developing cities of the southern hemisphere must be just beginning the same cyclic process. In the UK the more recent studies of Massey and others<sup>11</sup> warn us against this generalising approach, reminding us that each city will have its own story, for there are new forces at work which will radically divert these newly expanding cities of the South away from the old European and North American models. Calcutta is not queuing up to become another Los Angeles! — it has its own particular mix of complex historical strata, sub-cultures and local environments. The California School of urban geography<sup>12</sup> has likewise moved our understanding away from deterministic urban forms to an exploration of emergent trends in processes shaping urban landscapes, economies and cultures. These processes will include globalization, as well as received or imagined perceptions of the urban environment.<sup>13</sup> It is true however that cities do have in common an openness to new possibilities of interchange between people – if they fail in this, they die. All cities bring people together, concentrating and intensifying their narratives, but the stories are nevertheless specific and different. And although the globalizing nature of the powers that operate across the cities of

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<sup>11</sup> Doreen Massey, John Allen and Steve Pile, eds., *Understanding Cities: City Worlds* (London: Routledge, & Open University 1999).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real and Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell 1996), or Mike Davis, *City of Quartz. Excavating the Future of Los Angeles* (London: Pimlico 1998).

<sup>13</sup> These trends in urban thinking are summarised in Tim Hall, *Urban Geography*, (Routledge 2nd edition 2000).

the world are such that the pressing problems of poverty and inequality must be addressed by consolidated and globally co-ordinated approaches, the specific policies adopted in one city will not be uniformly applicable to all other cities. Cities remain different.

If generalising historical theories of urban formation are not sufficient in themselves, then neither are theories based solely on the processes of economics. It is true to say that a major reason why industrial cities exist is because urban concentration brings the benefits of considerable economic saving, but economic factors will not sustain a city unless there is also a commensurate development in the city's social structure and technological progress. Human beings are gregarious, not merely fiscal or efficient. The development of political, military or religious social organisation must progress sufficiently for the urban community to be able to organise and coordinate complex structures in order to take advantage of geographical, economic and historical factors. The story of the city must therefore be told from many perspectives if it is to be true – perspectives that will include the economic, historical, technological, social, religious, geographical, theological and political. Any approach to a proper and informed understanding of the urban will therefore of necessity have to be multi-disciplinary, and this is a salutary warning for the Church which has often sought to engage in urban mission without first discovering for itself this breadth of appreciation.

The great biblical empires of Assyria, Babylon, Persia and especially Rome were such that at their height the known world became a global network of trade, military forces and political powers. And yet up to 1550 only one percent of the earth's population was urban with the world's ten largest cities all in Europe. Economic, political and technological development taken together could not sustain anything greater. Then, through the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries new technologies allowed for the accumulation of wealth through trade of agricultural and craft items – the system often referred to as 'mercantilism' – which established cities with a strong central core and a small local periphery. The highest profits were to be made from long-distance trade and this motive led to the development of larger colonial coastal cities through which distant foreign trade could be funnelled to the mother countries. From the eighteenth century on the new technologies and social processes of

industrial capitalism developed, which meant that workers were no longer in a position to bargain for their goods but sold their skills or time to the rising entrepreneurs and the owners of the new huge mills and factories. This system required vast quantities of raw materials and large markets – two requirements best served by the development of empire – and in this Britain and France led the world as its cities, already being the foci of consumption and trade, now became centres for organised mass production.

Mercantilism had always assumed that the total volume of trade was a constant within which merchants would have to compete, but the larger the scale of economic activity the more it became clear that it was possible ruthlessly to exploit new markets and to enlarge production accordingly. This enlargement allowed large monopolies to develop in the course of time so that by the end of the nineteenth century the earlier industrial capitalism and colonialism was being replaced by economic monopolies within state-controlled empires, resulting eventually in a smaller number of producers within each market sector. The great military empires of Great Britain and France were joined by the United States' 'empire' of influence and power, and the industrialized cities responded to the new concentrations of power by expanding their core areas, leaving the peripheral areas as yet barely touched by the development that was to come later.

More recently still, this monopoly capitalism has developed new global dimensions. New technologies have combined with these powerful economic forces to make the world a smaller place. This process has created a 'global village' where the nation states and political blocs are eclipsed by the power of the new transnational corporations (TNCs). These corporations numbered only some seven thousand in 1969 whereas today there are more than forty-five thousand<sup>14</sup>, dealing mainly in petrol, cars, electronics, food, drugs and chemicals. All of a sudden, they control over one third of all private sector capital and the turnover of just one TNC often exceeds that of a nation, giving them the economic power sometimes to side-step national planning and

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<sup>14</sup> United Nations. *World Investment Report 1997* enumerates some forty-five thousand transnational firms controlling two-hundred-thousand foreign affiliates. They account for fifty-one of the world's one hundred largest economic entities (the other forty-nine are countries).



policy, directing nations to produce and restructure at their own economic whim to advance the interests of their own share-holders. Whilst concentrating the decision-making and researching powers in the wealthy cities of the North, the productive capacity is channelled by TNCs into low labour-cost locations creating thereby a global division of labour with many a developing city concentrating on a particular pattern of production, capital accumulation and ownership. These differences between cities only serve to emphasise the cultural, religious, historical, social and geographical differences already existing, and reinforce those influences and groups who would want to sue for independent power and strong manifestations of separate identity.

This global divergence, whereby the differences between cities are emphasised, is contradicted by a global convergence, whereby consumer preferences across the globe converge to North American and European tastes and patterns - the 'MacDonaldization' of the globe! For the technologies and processes of the new global capitalism are not value-free but carry with them the ideologies and dominant values of the society in which they were born. TNCs thereby become the carriers of tastes, values and the ideologies of a western capitalist culture. They share an underlying commodity mentality, whereby people and things are evaluated according to how they relate to an economic market, and in addition the new high-tech companies modelled on Silicon Valley bring with them a mind-set which has a love of high-stake risk-taking, a lack of fealty to an employer and an aversion to working within any strict hierarchy. Globalization is value-laden and inevitably inculcates its values into every nerve ending of its great empire. So the global city traveller will be assailed by the seeming incongruity of the very familiar marks of the globalizing western economy stamped upon the diversity of the local culture. I was stunned to come across a drive-through MacDonald's in the middle of the Negev desert, whilst the coffee-house chain Starbucks is now a prominent feature of the forbidden city in Beijing.

But the same economic forces will, as we have seen, also strangely encourage localisation, which may issue in tribalism, nationalism, anti-capitalist ideologies and anti-western religious fundamentalism, all driving for the strengthening of local identity against those dominating western values.

Samuel P Huntington<sup>15</sup> has asserted that the fundamental source of conflict in this new globalized world will no longer be primarily ideological nor even economic but cultural, as the great contrasting civilisations, be they Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American or African, seek to counter the West's promotion of its own values of democracy and liberalism, its military predominance and its economic interests. This is because globalization, for all its homogenising of states and cultures, also challenges groups to identify and assert themselves, for globalization is unlikely to provide an international culture that will prove at all satisfactory to the personal needs of different human beings around the world – so the differences will out. Globalized capitalism however has a strategy even for these circumstances and to oppose this all-too-human resistance to conformity and domination, the TNCs utilise the sophistication of modern technologies to offer the fruits of global production in forms which are particularized to the wishes of the local. An international corporation will not find it difficult to alter the specification of its product to suit particular local tastes and preferences around the world. Henry Ford's Model T was only available in black; today its modern counterpart can be had in any finish or design we desire. The TNCs have thus learnt to 'think globally whilst acting locally', termed in the management jargon - 'glocalization'.<sup>16</sup>

I would hope that my brief historical survey has served to show that Globalization is a process which has been underway for generations. Was it not in 1848 that Marx, in his Communist Manifesto, told the workers of the world to unite against what he perceived as the growing globalization of capital? Was it not the invention of the telegraph in 1837 which vastly accelerated the elimination of the spatial problems of communication years before e-mail was conceived? But quite clearly this long process of globalization has of late impacted upon our consciousness with new clarity and power. The financial deregulation begun in the 1970s in the United States; the technological advances induced by two world wars and the subsequent international arms trade; the burgeoning media and information revolution; and, perhaps above all, the systems of transport enabling

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<sup>15</sup> 'The Clash of Civilisations?' in *Foreign Affairs* (Vol 72, No 3. 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity' in Scott Lash and Roland Robertson, eds., *Global Modernities* (London: Sage, 1995).

commodities and people to be moved swiftly and inexpensively over vast distances – when all taken together spell out a new world in which Globalization comes into its own.

We might therefore define Globalization as what happens when these powerful economic forces combine with the radically new technologies and when the political bi-polar segmentation of the world into East and West, capitalist and communist, is altered by the demise of the East-West political and ideological division into a multi-polar political environment. This political world-view provides fertile ground for the economic powers and the new technologies to combine to produce processes which have immense control around the world – changing the nature, functions and powers of the State, leading to vast migrations of people, the fragmentation and dispersal of manufacturing and construction systems, and producing a new hyper-urbanization of the globe. David Harvey says that capitalism ‘builds and rebuilds a geography in its own image’<sup>17</sup> and just as our cities have so often developed in accordance with the economic, technological and sociological needs of the time, so once again the very shape of our cities and the urbanization of the world is developing in accordance with the requirements of these global forces – and with unprecedented speed.

## 2. World Cities

The term ‘world city’ was coined by Geddes as long ago as 1915 and was later taken up in 1966 by Hall in his work *The World Cities*<sup>18</sup> to mean those places where the world’s most important business is conducted. But in our times, Friedman, King, and Sassen<sup>19</sup> have redefined the phrase to mean those places where such accumulation and concentration of capital occurs and from which the distribution of commodities and ideas is organised, that they have

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<sup>17</sup> David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh University Press 2000) p.54.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Hall, *The World Cities* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson. 3rd edition 1984).

<sup>19</sup> J. Friedman, ‘The World City Hypothesis’ in *Development and Change* 17 pp.69-74 (Sage Publications Ltd, 1986); Anthony King, *Global Cities: Post-imperialism and the Internationalisation of London* (London: Routledge 1989); Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (London: Pine Forge Press, 2nd edition 2000).

become the command and control centres of global capitalism. They contain the headquarters of the transnational corporations and finance services, and this of course gives the World Cities a distinct social style – offering their high-earning élites unparalleled access to the world's most powerful key players, be they politicians or competitors, and access too to business information, networking all this through corporate entertaining, diplomacy and electronic technology. Telecommunication aids the flow of ideas and finance and allows for the manipulation of the system through a global bureaucracy of banking and currency, insurance, accountancy, advertising, law and corporate drive – and all staffed by a new, often wealthy, meritocracy of middle-class achievers – another big feature of the 'world city'. These cities are still mainly to be found in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan. However Saskia Sassen writes about the emergence of a hierarchy of 'global cities'.<sup>20</sup> World-wide the three dominant financial centres are London, New York and Tokyo, with London the most international of the three. Frankfurt, Paris, Milan, Zurich and Luxembourg are strong centres in Europe, while Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and Bombay are major Asian centres along with Kuala Lumpur. London has foreign exchange turnover almost as sizeable as New York and Tokyo combined, and has the largest concentration of foreign banks (over six hundred) in the world.<sup>21</sup> Tokyo and London dominate banking, London the foreign exchange markets, and New York has the world's largest market in corporate equity – all demonstrating their power not by their size but by their global reach beyond their own national boundaries. It is interesting in this regard to compare the international power of the small city of Washington D.C., with a population of five hundred and twenty three thousand, with the relative powerlessness of the ever-expanding Mexico City, with an estimated population of about twenty three million.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press. Revised edition 2000).

<sup>21</sup> See *Money Across Frontiers – the Explosion of Global Finance. Understanding Global Issues* 99/3, ed. Richard Buckley with consultant Professor Marcus Miller (Cheltenham England).

<sup>22</sup> See the fascinating TV programme: *City Stories. Mexico City: whose city?* Video available from Open University Worldwide, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. [ouwengq@open.ac.uk](mailto:ouwengq@open.ac.uk)



The recent attempted merger of the London and Frankfurt exchanges has introduced the new dynamic of a dual city approach to maintaining global advantage. But where some gain advantage, others of course suffer. Sassen comments 'Alongside these new global and regional hierarchies of cities is a vast territory that has become increasingly peripheral, increasingly excluded from the major economic processes that fuel economic growth in the new global economy'.<sup>23</sup> We might argue that technological and economic apartheid is apparent in the continued exclusion of continental Africa from the global connectivity that is emerging so that the cities of Africa do not even feature in Sassen's hierarchy of global cities.<sup>24</sup>

And yet we must take care not to be swept along with the rhetoric of globalization studies to accept that the economically significant world cities are the only centres of power. For although economics is a tremendously powerful factor on the world stage there are other forces which are equally important for a Christian analysis. Are not Milan and Paris great design power-houses? Are not Rome, Jerusalem and Mecca powerful, international religious centres? Are not Calcutta and Mexico significant and influential centres of cultural importance? Nevertheless, even here outside the strictly economic sphere, globalization is very evident, for a *fatwa* can be issued in Tehran, taken up in Los Angeles and books burnt in Bradford all within twenty-four hours. A film can be shot in New York and edited in Soho the same day, and televised internationally that evening. The politics of Kashmir can directly affect the result of a local council election in Birmingham, UK. 'Translocality', the interaction between local situations regardless of geography, is an increasing dynamic in this new world context.<sup>25</sup>

We also do well to remember not to equate globalization with homogenization, for it is still important to recognise that there are strong local factors of culture, civilisation, religion, history and language which militate

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<sup>23</sup> Sassen, Saskia 'The global city: strategic site/new frontier' in Engin F. Isin *Democracy, Citizenship and the Global City* (London: Routledge 2000) p.51.

<sup>24</sup> Manuel Castells refers to the 'disinformation of Africa'. *End of Millennium* (Blackwell: London 2nd ed. 2000) p.95.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Peter Smith, *Transnational Urbanism. Locating Globalization* (Oxford: Blackwell 2001) p.169.

against the dominating power of western capitalist forces and will not allow globalization to sweep differences aside. The Nation States still have their particular agendas, local environmentalist groups speak out, and national heritage organisations increase in influence. There have been many riots around the world protesting at the Bretton Woods organisations' suppression of food subsidies, and the 1999 uprising in Seattle against the injustices of the international trade systems was further evidence of populist dissent against the manipulation of trade by dominant global players. On the other hand we have also seen Le Pen in France, Haider in Austria and elements of the right in Britain whipping up fascist opposition to the supra-national collaboration which global forces introduce.

Likewise, we must not think that globalization means that all the great cities will have to become or even emulate the economic 'world cities'. A world city's focus on the global dimension can become so dominant that it may lead to a partial disconnection from its own national territory, leaving the routine activities of sustaining the national economy to be handled by the large regional cities acting as 'core cities' to their surrounding regions. So-called 'core cities' become the command and control centres for regional domestic economies and only from that base then interlink with global networks whilst keeping their main focus on servicing local clients and branches of multinational firms.<sup>26</sup> Regional core cities also relate their surrounding rural villages and towns by networking across the local region and hopefully providing the engine for growth in economy and culture. They can however become neglected in comparison with the needs of the world city by a national government which may become somewhat overwhelmed by the dimensions and all-consuming needs of the great metropolis. The smaller regional core cities have always therefore to market themselves afresh to attract sufficient attention from inward investors and entrepreneurs, in order to sustain themselves and continue to be noticed on the national and world stage. If they decline then the surrounding rural, as well as the internal urban populace, suffer as a consequence.

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<sup>26</sup> See *Core Cities: Key Centres for Regeneration* (Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne (August 1999). <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/curds/urrb/>

If any city in the world finds itself today left out of the power loop of the dominating economic and cultural global forces then they may find their own populace devaluing the cultural values which they themselves signify. It is readily to be observed in the Philippines for example that many young people go out of their way to copy American styles, that many African children know more about English football players than about their own indigenous heroes and that the advantages of Microsoft technology is better accessed by use of the English language than a local Asian dialect.

And for all the seeming logicity of the story of global urbanization so far told, there is also a strange illogicality still to be addressed.

### 3 The New Illogicality

As many of the economically powerful old cities of the developed world are following the expected logical pattern described by early western analysts and are losing their central populations to the small towns, suburbs and pleasant rural areas,<sup>27</sup> so the new cities of the developing world are growing out of all recognition, and not in proportion to an increase in economic wealth or power at all! What bucks the old models of urban development (and the demands of human justice) is that urbanization in the developing world seems to be occurring where very low levels of economic development are apparent. This is termed 'urban inflation', where urbanization (the concentration of the urban) outstrips industrialization, becoming ever inversely related to wealth. And this is not at all in conformity with the classic urban cycle of development which the western theorists foretold.

Cities attract people from rural areas because they promise a better quality of life, better employment opportunities and educational and health facilities. They promise for many the possibility of sheer survival! In addition to this enticement, the growth of the cities of the developing nations is influenced by irresistible pressure from international financing agents, such as the World

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<sup>27</sup> Anne Power & Katherine Mumford, *The slow death of great cities? Urban abandonment or urban renaissance* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1999). Summary: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/519.htm>

Bank, to produce and export not staple crops for home consumption but exotic crops for foreign currency earning. This means that rural communities are no longer sustained by what they can grow locally and so those who traditionally lived close to the land must now seek sustenance in the city. Additionally, as the cities grow in size so their appetite grows and their 'footprint' (that is the area which is subsumed to their need) increases to include not just their immediate hinterland but much further afield – even to foreign producers. The cities of the wealthy thus determine the international production of food for their own benefit so that rural food production is controlled and constrained by international urban pressures. In the West, agricultural workers lose their livelihoods and in the developing nations they are forced into even more abject poverty. In those developing nations this urban power is further aggravated by trade tariffs against rural production, the creation of Free Trade Zones to attract international investment, and the demise of preference for locally produced staples, combining to destroy the vigour of rural areas so that the rural population flees to the cities, which are thereby overburdened with the human casualties these pressures create.

All this issues in city population figures reaching unprecedented heights. Pre-industrial rates of fertility and post-industrial mortality rates combine to create steep natural population increments in the cities whilst in-migration from the country-side of those seeking employment and food sends population figures sky-rocketing. Already Mexico City, São Paulo and Shanghai are estimated to have populations of over twenty-three millions each. By the year 2025 it is estimated<sup>28</sup> that there will be four-hundred and eighty-six cities of more than a million inhabitants in the developing nations. Sixty per cent of Africans, fifty per cent of Asians and eighty-five percent of Latin Americans will live in urban settlements by that same year. In Britain the figure is already over eighty percent. When in the 'sixties Doxiadis spoke of *ecumenopolis*<sup>29</sup> the concept seemed fantastical – it would appear that we are now fast approaching the reality!

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Potter & Sally Lloyd-Evans, *The City in the Developing World* (Longman 1998).

<sup>29</sup> C.A. Doxiadis, *Ecumenopolis. The Inevitable City of the Future* (New York: Norton 1974).



Additionally as more of the world's population actually live in cities in today's global culture, one does not even have to live in the city in order to be saturated by its values, style and urban imagery. This overlay of local or rural cultures by urban modes of thinking and acting is termed 'urbanism' and is so powerfully infectious that it is sometimes difficult for those thus influenced even to be aware that it is happening to them. It is as if the city is no longer constrained spatially as urban lifestyles are broadcast daily by the mass media which inculcate urban influences, attitudes and values. So it is that 'we are all urban now', and urban manners of thinking and decision-making can become the natural preference of governments everywhere. It is little wonder that around the western world the grievance is voiced by agricultural lobbies that rural concerns and fears are not being properly addressed by governments which seem to be far too influenced by urban styles and concerns. But while the rural dwellers and the urban dwellers therefore begin to see one another as enemies, in fact they are both failing to realise that their different problems are but varying symptoms of the very same urbanizing and globalizing processes which call for their common attention and mutual engagement.

Some societies fail to recognise the reality of their own urbanization and urbanism and instead bolster their sense of security and identity by sustaining an unrealistic and nostalgic myth of their remaining a rural society when they are plainly nothing of the kind. There do remain vast areas still unaffected of course, but as the urban symbols and values spread from the metropolitan centres out to the peripheries and beyond, so Marshall McLuhan's vision<sup>30</sup> of a 'global village' turns into the reality of 'global urbanization'. So 'urbanism', (the urban mind-set) divorced from the city is part of modernisation, and whereas the city of the earlier period of industrial capitalism was developed to bring people together it is now possible for many to be 'urban', in terms of the dominant values they espouse, without ever living in the city. In this sense, almost all of us are 'urban' now, and in the face of such powerful forces and advanced technologies, urban community no longer requires propinquity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (London: Routledge, 1964).

<sup>31</sup> In passing it is interesting to note how the Christian doctrine of the Communion of Saints – our belonging to a community unfettered by space and time – and our belief that the Church has a universality even in each small local eucharistic gathering, speaks directly to this new global condition.

One of the very positive things about this ubiquitous urbanization is that the size of the modern cities is such that they can sustain a rich variety of sub-cultures, offering the possibility of solidarity for those who otherwise might find themselves in isolation. This great array of urban sub-cultures produces a rich pluriformity within a locality, at its best issuing in an exciting vibrancy — a kaleidoscope of colour, sound and taste. I have written elsewhere<sup>32</sup> of the many exciting benefits of urban life but on the other hand some experience this constant theatre of otherness as a threatening superficiality, an anonymity resulting in detachment, alienation and even deviance. Such urbanism begins to measure even relationships as financial transactions and to treat others, in conformity with the dominant global culture, merely as commodities in an impersonal market place.

#### **4. Where does this leave the poor?**

These inter-related processes of globalization and urbanization, and their struggle with local cultural identities, issue in seismic changes which have devastating effects upon millions of urban and rural dwellers alike. Vast numbers of people in the developing countries are forced to migrate from worsening rural poverty and lack of opportunity to the appalling conditions and dismal living standards of the urban slums. In the developing nations, between twenty and thirty million people each year make this move from countryside to town, the equivalent of the population of a whole country like Kenya or Spain per annum, and the developing cities simply do not have the infrastructure or accommodation to handle such phenomenal increases.

Most in-comers arrive initially in the city centres but gravitate out to the peripheral slums, the *bustees* or *favelas*, which squat on high-risk, hazardous sites without the support of legality, sewerage, infrastructure or secure tenure. For some of the poor it is a self-build first step to home ownership, but for

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<sup>32</sup> Laurie Green, 'Blowing Bubbles: Poplar' and 'The Body: physicality in the UPA' in *God in the City* ed. Peter Sedgwick (London: Mowbray, 1995).

most it is despairing last step to destitution. As many as ninety percent of the urban dwellers of Addis Ababa live in slum-shanties and more than a third of all the urban dwellers of the developing world have to eke out a life in these abysmal circumstances.<sup>33</sup> Some governments make false promises of upgrading the shanties in order to gain short-term electoral advantage, among the few who are registered to vote, but most of the folk who inhabit these hovels know only too well that the likelihood of change for the better is minimal. They have, from this grinding daily experience of living against all the odds, so very much to teach the Church about the realities of living by faith, hope and solidarity, and in turn challenge the Church to say what is the Good News it preaches beyond the faith and hope they already themselves have in large measure.

The informal economy provides most of the minimally-available employment in these vast newly-expanding cities (as much as eighty percent in Nigeria) and this informal economy is often so sophisticated that it is geared in to the global economy through the transnational corporate systems, selling such commodities as Coca Cola on street corners and providing sweat shop labour for western designer label companies. The dangerous and polluting conditions in which those with work are expected to operate has issued in such industrial outrages as the Indian Bhopal disaster in 1984 when as many as 3,300 died needlessly. Around the world two hundred million children are employed in dreadful conditions and in these harsh surroundings child prostitution, extortion and drug addiction abound. In this global culture of disposable commodities, even children are commodified – such as those consigned to the streets of Rio de Janeiro and shot in their hundreds if they intimidate shoppers with their begging.

The World Bank, the World Trade Organisation,<sup>34</sup> the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other ‘free trade’ institutions have a strong influence upon work opportunities across the globe since their programmes

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<sup>33</sup> See *Developments – the International Development Magazine*. Issue 10 (London: Department for International Development 2000) <http://www.developments.org.uk>

<sup>34</sup> The WTO developed in 1994 as the successor of the narrower GATT talks (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade).

for debt relief of poor nations demand from those poorer debtor countries a decrease in wages, an increase in inappropriate modern technologies and the move in production towards currency-earning exports rather than towards the needy home market. These measures are required of borrowers in order ostensibly that they may better be able to engage in the global 'free' market. But all this spells an increase in poverty for any country seeking to engage in that free market because it will begin from such a low economic base that it can only be driven further down the economic scale when competing against the head-start of the wealthy nations. So it is that global pressures determine the local economic experience, exacerbating poverty and further concentrating the urban.

Within the developing cities the exclusion of the poorest of the poor on the basis of caste and gender intensifies the urban oppression. At the same time lack of pure water, the increase of the rate of maternal deaths and the recurrence of previously eradicated disease are symptomatic of the recent reductions in their governments' spending due largely to the demands of wealthy governments and the World Bank in relation to the restructuring of international debts. These same deprived people have, for the same reason, additionally to suffer cutbacks in educational programmes where gender preferences and culturally and vocationally inappropriate educational syllabuses still dominate in any case.

While all this is happening in the developing nations, the poor of the cities of the so-called developed world have also to face the debilitating and alienating international pressures of globalization where its economic forces and its new technologies are constantly moving research and control to the rich world, and production industry to the poor developing nations. For those in the North who are trained and positioned favourably, the economic standard of living can improve, but those who are not equipped for the research and control functions of the market are left jobless and, due to the growing individualism of the dominant culture, left to their own devices. In Britain the poor have become significantly poorer in recent decades as they have seen the urban built environment around them decay.

It is not of course only industrial production which is being moved away from the developed world as food processors and distributors find that the rural communities of the northern hemisphere charge more for their produce than do the poor rural farmers of the south. The World Bank when restructuring international debt in poor countries demands that they change from growing staple crops for the home market to crops for foreign currency earnings, so further impoverishing the food producers of the developing nations and at the same time sending the farms of the North into sharp decline since they cannot keep up with the dwindling return on their produce. From the world cities the operators of the global food markets and distribution systems thus control rural life around the world for the benefit of international capital. Their predominantly urban consumers are so far removed by their urbanism from the source of their food that they largely accept without question the supermarket produce with which they are supplied, and the farmers themselves find themselves at the mercy of mega-city consumption and market forces and controlled by the big players. Only the urban rich seem to gain from the system whilst the majority remain unwitting pawns in a global structure which drives more and more into poverty.

This is very evident in a country like the United States where, as Forbes magazine recently reported, there are one hundred and forty-nine billionaires and yet thirty-six million people who now live below the poverty line. Those in the developed westernized nations who have no access to the benefits of a society built on new technologies, financial systems, and skill-demands go to the wall.

The economic systems and new technologies of globalization carry with them a culture of dominating values. We might name them as 'commodification' (everything and everyone is reducible to a cash value); 'efficiency' (success is to be measured by its rate of productivity rather than its innate value); and 'knowledge' (which is information rather than wisdom). Those who do not conform to these dominant values are excluded from the global society, as of no worth or value. They are therefore not only made financially poor but are alienated and demeaned spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. There would seem to be no escape from the alienation which these global forces invoke, even for those who seek the affirmation of their local identity in the

espousal of religious fundamentalism, for that fundamentalism itself is in no way immune from the subtle influences of the values of globalizing market forces. For the driving force of such fundamentalism is a modern, angry and somewhat nostalgic antagonism to that globalization and it is thereby not a pure espousal of an earlier faith but is an act contaminated by the very values it wishes to gainsay.

Others who reach the very nadir of this alienation in the decaying inner cities, housing projects and outer estates of the developed world may find themselves immersed in deviant or criminal behaviour but here again they will not escape those subtle global processes. Even if poverty drives them into drug addiction, the drugs themselves are a commodity of a major global network. If they venture into urban violence, it will be served by the international trade in micro-arms. If they descend into prostitution they will find themselves enmeshed in a traffic which is increasingly the new global slave-market. Those western poor who just manage to make a living find themselves controlled and directed by the global market to such an extent that they spend vast proportions of their meagre incomes on international 'designer' branded goods, often manufactured by the impoverished of the two-thirds world. The designer advertising which seduces the young of the northern and southern hemispheres alike, is sustained intentionally by the international companies at a high premium. David Korten notes in his book *When Corporations Rule the World*<sup>35</sup> that Nike paid twenty million dollars to the U.S. sports star Michael Jordan to promote its shoes — which was more than the entire annual income of the Indonesian workers who made them.

So it is that the demanding processes of global urbanization leave the inner cities and priority-need estates of the northern hemisphere to decay and smoulder — just as the southern cities become over-loaded and advance nearer to chaos. The miracle is that despite all the horrendous injustices, corruption and terrifying growth of these great cities of the developing world, they continue, somehow, to operate. Their resilience and dogged stability in the face of such astounding pressure and lack of acceptable infrastructure defies belief. It is difficult to credit that our cities can do other than grind to a

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<sup>35</sup> (London: Earthscan 1996).



halt under the burdens and intolerable strain of it all, and the search is on for ways to regenerate and support the growing demands of the urban centres. Further industrialization is understood by many to be the usual means of creating the necessary wealth to develop the cities in order to answer these challenges and sustain today's population but this selfsame industrialization seems instead to be the very cause of further devastation in the cities of the south. Pollution, over-exploitation of resources, the concentration of population and so many other negative consequences seem to follow. In 1987, *The Brundtland Commission: Our Common Future* defined sustainable development as 'development which meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' This challenge, more than ever, underlines the need for sensitive and strategic research just when we least seem to have time for it – the crisis is so immediate and pressing!

## II. THE CHRISTIAN IN THE GLOBAL CITY: WHAT TO DO?

Nevertheless, around the world the challenges of urban globalization are being studied and addressed. It is increasingly acknowledged that answers which seemed appropriate only twenty years ago no longer apply in this extraordinarily new environment. The spiralling changes and challenges are political, geographical, social, developmental, cultural, and of course economic and technological. And the changes are so acute that aid and environmental agencies are shifting their emphases to meet the challenge of this global urbanization.<sup>36</sup> United Nations programmes on settlement, food, population, and the environment, are all concerned with the need for sustainable urban communities. Even the World Bank's recent World Development Report 1999/2000, entitled *Entering the Twenty-first Century*, acknowledges that they have been misjudging the situation. Their report concludes, 'The next step is to initiate an empowerment process that enables community-based groups to define their own goals and options... and to

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<sup>36</sup> For example, the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh was set up in 1976 to bring aid agency investment into conjunction with the needs of the local poor by providing micro credit networks. <http://www.grameen.com>

assume responsibility for actions to achieve those goals.<sup>37</sup> Their responses thus far, they now acknowledge, have not sufficiently appreciated the importance of local communities amidst the pressures of global processes. But whilst it has not been easy for such mammoth institutions to rethink their policies in the face of the new learning, they have realised the necessity.

Our question must now be: 'Is the Church up to speed on the situation?' Can its institutions appreciate that whereas its resources and structures are in the main largely geared to an earlier model of society very different from that of today, global urbanization is now the dominant experience for the majority of the world's population, and will increasingly be so. If the Church is not to repeat old irrelevancies it must ask itself what God's will might be for the Church in this new situation. Rather than address the issue from the perspective of the needs of our old institutions, the Church will do well to look from a more theocentric perspective and ask, 'What is the Mission of God in this urbanizing world and how can the Church as the Body of Christ live that out?' Indeed, as we seek to be more theocentric, does the dynamic nature of the world which we now perceive ever more clearly not demand that we revisit our traditional view of its creator as a static and unbending Godhead and think more radically of the God who enters into the process with us in a dynamic and interrelating manner? And if God is in mission in this dynamic and ongoing relationship, we must ask ourselves, 'When Jesus weeps over the City, what is it about this newly urbanizing globe that makes it a world that he is still prepared to die for?' And what is it that the Church therefore must do and be in order to play its part in that compassionate process of salvation? And furthermore, if Liberation Theology has taught the Church anything at all it is that 'salvation' is more than a pietistic, individualistic and disembodied freeing from concerns. It is a full and free salvation from all that holds back the human community from living as made in the image of their God. How then can the Church address an urbanized humanity and the globalizing processes and structures, and speak the appropriate Good News in word and deed in our generation?

Having thus made such a call to action, I would want nevertheless to suggest

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<sup>37</sup> *Entering the 21st Century. World Development Report* (New York: World Bank/OUP). <http://www.worldbank.org/wdr/>

that our first step must be to pause and contemplate. For just as reflection without action is impotent, so action devoid of reflection is anarchic. All too often we rush past the truth in our search for answers. We fail to listen to the voice of the oppressed – to stand silently at the foot of the cross and learn the depths of compassion. We feel sure that we must be bright enough to see the answer and we try to contrive ‘salvation’ without having the wisdom first to see the depths and complexities of the question. We must learn to stop ignoring the real suffering by our quick-fire abstract associations and connections and listen to the cry from the cross – ‘My God why have you forsaken me?’ As theologians we have been too prone to looking for connections and meanings even where no such connections actually exist, and where it is the very meaninglessness which intensifies the suffering. Before rushing into ‘mission mode’ we must therefore learn the discipline of the attentive analysis of our arena of mission with all its globalization and urbanization, researching prayerfully and reflecting theologically before making any assumptions about meaning or what might be God’s Good News to the situation. For unthought-through mission is likely to be dominated by our own needs and fears, and by the juggernaut nature of our institutions, whereas attentive listening and prayerful ‘standing alongside’ will issue in a growing awareness of what God is and where God is in the situations which confront us. Only then might our missionary endeavours be faithfully attuned to the Mission of God rather than the relentless pursuit of our own mission needs. Urban mission must be underpinned by a multi-disciplinary and prayerful analysis. We must listen, watch and act in solidarity.<sup>38</sup>

And as we stand attentively at the foot of the cross and listen, so our hearts will be moved to *metanoia*, translated in our New Testament often as ‘repentance’ but perhaps thought of better as ‘new-mindedness’. It will be a *metanoia* regarding the dominant values of the global, urbanizing culture which we have been describing. The Church, alongside the poor and those of good-will, must stand for an alternative mind-set, learnt from its own traditions, which illuminates and where necessary challenges the powers and dynamics which we have begun to describe in this paper. For example, the

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<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Andrew P. Davey, ‘Globalization as Challenge and Opportunity in Urban Mission. An Outlook from London’, in *International Review of Mission*, vol. LXXXVIII/351, October 1999.

commodification of persons and of religion – treating all as if they were just another commodity in the market-place – must be questioned, repented of, and fought against. Chapter 13 of the Book of Revelation reminds us that we wear the mark of the beast specifically in order to operate in the market. The beast ‘compelled everyone – small and great alike, rich and poor, slave and citizen – to be branded on the right hand or on the forehead, and made it illegal for anyone to buy or sell anything unless he had been branded with the name of the beast or with the number of its name... the number 666.’ (verses 16-18). We can all become marked by a dominating cultural evil as we participate in the global market place. When we purchase items that were made in the sweat-shops of our global production economy, of necessity we have to participate in the injustices of the market for our own survival, but we do not have to agree with the ideologies and values which underpin it. We can exchange the mark of the beast for a new mark on our foreheads – the baptismal mark of the Lamb (Revelation 14:1) and in this baptismal repentance or *metanoia* and from this conscientised awareness, we may then discover ways to unmask the principalities and powers operating within the new urbanized global markets and seek to eradicate them. We can in this political sense be ‘in the world and yet not of it’, and we can campaign and work for the dynamics of the global market to be re-structured in accordance with alternative Godly values. Let me offer an example of how this may operate.

At present we are prone to speak of ‘marginalization’, but closer scrutiny from the perspective of the cross would indicate that the concept of ‘marginality’ is wanting, since time and again it is what appears to be eccentric or marginal to the main body of the community that proves in fact to be central to its dynamic. Often, others are described as ‘marginal’ to reflect our own wish to believe we are normal and they should become like us, whereas time and again Jesus takes a marginal figure, such as a child, and makes that person central to his community’s perspective. The people of the shanty *favelas* of Latin America would appear to be out on the limb of marginalization from the main-stream community, until careful analysis and closer scrutiny indicates that the services offered by shanty dwellers largely maintain the infrastructure of their city for the benefit of the rich. So the poor maintain the rich whilst at the same time eking out a living for themselves by

picking at the discarded debris of the rich – literally the ‘crumbs that fall from the table’. There is a strange symbiotic relationship between poverty and wealth even at this mundane level, proving that poverty is not ‘marginal’ to wealth but is often its necessary soul-mate. Such an insight is typical of the new-mindedness which comes from social analysis and baptismal repentance.

In similar fashion the Church must learn to analyse not merely from the perspective, and with the tools, of the oppressors. For example, we may well be tempted to perceive the downtrodden simply in terms of their inability to compete in the global market-place and in terms of the danger they pose to the equilibrium of the free global market. However, rather than this concentration on their ‘inability’ – very much an analysis from the perspective of the powerful – why not concentrate upon their ‘vulnerability’, since vulnerability takes into account housing tenure and health, employment, poverty and stress, and in addition the hidden skills, powers and supportive beliefs and networks of the poor. We must learn to think in this holistic manner, so that our perceptions are no longer limited by the oppressive mind-set of the values of the global economy. We must learn to discern what is going on around us from the perspective of Christian mores and values based upon the traditions of our faith, or as the Quaker communities were wont to express it, we must engage not in the War of the Beast, but in ‘the War of the Lamb’.

Again, as well as opting for this alternative *metanoia* mind-set, we must as Christians make an option for Community. In Britain our politicians are calling upon us to become more holistic in our political and social action and to engage in what they call ‘joined-up thinking’. But we must take this further and live in eucharistic ‘joined-up’ communities of solidarity with an awareness of the plight of others. Above all, the Church must see itself as a community of active participation in the Mission of God to the world in every generation – a learning community, intent on becoming aware of the needs and the cultural spirit of the downtrodden in solidarity with the oppressed. This is how Jesus lived his life as he bade those who followed him to move together in concert as eucharistic communities of thanksgiving and healing.

Some community strategies will seek to step aside from the global processes and create alternatives such as local bartering systems or LETS schemes,

where local currencies are created based upon the hours offered by a participant in service to the community. These projects challenge the dominant globalizing culture by affirming something quite different and very local. They focus upon loving and just relationships within the community of faith, but do not very significantly impinge upon the external realities we have been describing. Other initiatives will however seek to engage more directly in some way with the new processes of globalization and urbanization but based upon a Christian, alternative *metanoia* mind-set. Fair-trade groups connect issues of global and local justice for the producers of basic globally traded commodities such as tea and coffee. Others pose ethical questions about the production of brand-named clothing and other consumer goods. In this way these strategies seek not simply to enhance the quality of the community's internal relationships but additionally question and challenge the mind-sets and cultures of the dominant forces in society, often using the 'lower-circuits' of globalization to communicate and educate. Many Christian groups are already directly engaged in providing supportive and caring services, but increasingly we see Christian communities entering the wider debates, campaigning alongside others for justice and ethical standards and engaging in participatory models of community action. They have been very much involved with the 1999 Seattle fair-trade demonstration and have been instrumental in helping society to rethink its attitude to 'Third World' debt. They have participated in 'culture jamming'<sup>39</sup> activities where multi-national companies have had their advertising campaigns radically questioned. All this is evidence of *metanoia* action. Whilst many other voluntary agencies have withdrawn from incarnational engagement, the Christian communities are amongst those who remain active with their leaders, clerical and lay, still living in these impoverished communities and making their premises available for community use. In company with other groups they are proving that whilst global urbanization has developed apace without a care for social justice, local initiatives can be powerful weapons in the battle against the resultant exclusion and unrighteousness. The great difficulty is of course that we remain only a small sign on such a global canvas and the challenge is therefore to gain a sufficiently 'critical mass' to win the hearts of the majority so that a real impact can be made upon the global processes of commodification and exclusion.

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<sup>39</sup> See Naomi Klein, *No Logo. Taking aim at the brand bullies* (London: Flamingo 2000).



As we see from our earlier analysis, to affirm the local is to question the great bulldozer of global processes. Our churches can therefore encourage local enterprise, credit unions and local facilities, whilst pressurising local and state governments to target their tax incentives no longer towards the multi-national corporations but towards local entrepreneurs and employers and, in the countryside, upon local agriculture. Encouragement can be offered to fair-trade and co-operative ventures in the locality, and when they are networked, across the globe. The British government itself has recently begun to acknowledge<sup>40</sup> that the faith communities and the Christian churches in particular are and have for many years been well-placed to develop and maintain local regeneration, having had long experience of what is now called 'capacity building' in local communities (meaning the enriching of local personnel in community and leadership skills). We must capitalise on this governmental invitation by bringing our experience to the support of community participation and organisation and encourage all governments to welcome and support similar local initiatives in decision-making and power-sharing.

Specifically in the urban arena the eucharistic community will want to encourage all to think and act holistically, working with local government for example on replacing old traditional physical urban planning with integrated urban policy plans. Local government is often in a better position than national government to influence and deliver public services and by making an ally of government at that level more participatory action may follow in order to inculcate a culture of local democratic action for the common good. Only the building of a trusting alliance between a truly democratic local government, economic enterprise and the private and the voluntary sectors will provide the platform necessary to balance the dominant culture of the global and affirm the local culture and need appropriately. Partnership is notoriously difficult to achieve when the players have such different bottom-line agenda, but experience of good practice is growing and the benefits for all so great that it remains an essential strategy.

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<sup>40</sup> See *Policy Action Team 9 Report on Community Self-Help*, recommendation 4.17 ff. (Home Office / Social Exclusion Unit, 1999).

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/vcu/selfhelp.htm>

The regionalization of government which increasingly cuts across the nation-state principle, is another important entry point for eucharistic communities who wish to influence for good the economic strategies which will effect local people so radically. It is often at this level that political structures and non-governmental organisations actually are allowed to impact upon economic operators, who themselves have moved away from the national and are keen to utilise the promise of regenerative regional partnership to their own ends.

Regeneration and housing policy are constant bed-fellows but again can, in the wrong hands, be at the service of distant financiers and developers rather than the community who needs the housing so badly. Pressure groups must work with local and regional government to bring justice to land tenure and land management struggles, and seek the reform of financing structures and building codes in order that houses can be seen as homes and not simply as market commodities.

This constant affirmation of the local, at whatever level we are engaging, will help to maintain a right balance, given the dominating power of the distant global processes we have described in this paper. It illustrates the outworking of a mind-set which understands the need to put human beings before commodities, whilst welcoming the benefits which do nevertheless accrue from some aspects of the new processes. It is a stance which is reminiscent of the Church of England's *Faith in the City* Report with its exhortation that our churches should be 'local, outward-looking and participative' as well as ecumenical.<sup>41</sup> For the Church must, as the Body of Christ, be at all times incarnational – localized and yet understanding its global context very well. Local pastoral praxis must also be a global political praxis. We must not act locally without thinking globally. We must not think globally without acting locally.

For we must not fall captive to the simplistic analysis that rejects the global solely in favour of the local – for the realities of the world and the doctrines of

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<sup>41</sup> *Faith in the City – A Call for Action by Church and Nation. The report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Area* (London: Church House Publishing, 1985). Chapter 4.

our faith would have us be more critically discerning. Social and economic justice for many depends on our ability to exploit and negotiate, to the advantage of the poor, the global infrastructure that is emerging. This approach will necessitate some fairly sophisticated risks being taken and often will issue in failure and frustration. It was this same frustration that would appear to have caused such visible anger and pain on the streets of Seattle and Prague. Those demonstrations are an important illustration of the complex potential and yet the shaming failure that many face when trying to engage with the global changes that are taking place. For contrary to the views of some well-meaning activists, globalisation is not a juggernaut to be stopped at all costs, but rather a process that can be subverted through its 'lower circuits' as well as adapted, resisted and guided through whatever access can be gained to its higher circuits.<sup>42</sup> And working at these different levels can become possible if the right alliances are made by our faith communities with other non-formalised political actors.

And yet for the Church to learn these lessons it does not have to begin as if from scratch. In our traditional, credal teaching about the four marks of the Church, as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, we have in fact the signs of how the Church can be the very Body of Christ in our challenging, global, urban world, and by a thoughtful and prayerful consideration of those traditions, the new mind-set necessary for incarnational community action on the part of the Church can be informed.

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<sup>42</sup> Gunnell, Barbara & Timms, David (eds) *After Seattle. Globalisation and its discontents* (Catalyst: London 2000); see also Andrew Davey's paper for Claremont School of Theology's Urban Convocation, Fall 2000: 'The Church on the New Frontier. The Responsibility of Christian Community in the Global City'.

### III. THE FOUR MARKS OF THE CHURCH

#### 1. The Church must be One

Given all that has been said about the importance of the global, we might want to declaim that any project which only addresses local reality is doomed to failure. But perhaps our inherited doctrine of the unity of the Church allows us to act constructively in our local (or parochial) enterprises to good global effect. For our belief in the unity of the Church lays great store by the recognition that in every local Christian church, the whole Church is in fact resident. This age-old doctrine of the universality of the Church even in its local manifestations, has in it already what modern geographers, sociologists and economists are seeking after when the slogan is rehearsed, 'act locally, think globally'. When the president of the Eucharist addresses the congregation with the words, 'Let us give thanks to the Lord our God', s/he is using words of Jewish origin which were only to be used by rabbis on occasions when more than a hundred persons were in attendance<sup>43</sup> but these words may be said in the Eucharist when any number attend since it is to be understood that the Church Universal always is in attendance there. So just as the eucharistic presidency of an ordained minister rather than a local lay person indicates sacramentally that the local congregation is part of the global and Universal Church, so also the obverse is manifest in that the priest is not allowed to preside alone, but only in the presence of the local laity, and in this way all 'celebrate' together. So individuals know themselves to be in communion and never alone, just as the local knows itself to be always part of the whole. The Johannine emphasis upon our belonging to the whole is manifest in Jesus' repeated assertion in that gospel that we should all be in him as he is in the Father (John 14:8-21), and that we as the branches must never understand ourselves to be separate from the vine, which he himself is (John 15:1-17). It would seem that Jesus is not simply showing us that in our Christian community the local is in the universal and the universal in the local but that both are inclusive of the other for all are held in unity by something much deeper – namely the indwelling presence of the creator God. Our whole Christian mind-set then, as well as our action as the eucharistic community, must be at once both local and global.

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<sup>43</sup> See the reference to this in Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: A. & C. Black, 1945) p.79.

A well-integrated global communion of local churches can seek strategically to address issues at every pertinent level, be it local, national, continental or global but this however is easier said than done. The diverse patterns and styles of church which emanate from the vast array of cultures within which it is set inevitably produce tensions between its members when they seek to act strategically and globally as one. The inclusion in the gospel account of the prayer of Jesus that we should all be One (John 17) is clear evidence that this problem was there from the first. Clearly St Paul's reference to the need for the diverse limbs and organs of the Body to work strategically together in unity<sup>44</sup> is yet another allusion to the difficulties which the early Church had in trying to understand the interrelation between its own local and universal natures.

The Anglican tendency at present is to seek to address the opposing forces of globalization and localization, of centralization and subsidiarity by turning to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity of God as its model and solace, but a brief look at the political history of that doctrine soon teaches us that the institutional Church may find it difficult to learn the real lesson which the doctrine of the Trinity has to teach us. The history of trinitarian doctrine, like all theology, is contextually based, and is therefore itself a ready symptom of how the Church has sought to control the possible chaos of diversity and localization. In the Western Church, due to the Roman Catholic political preference for a centralized papal authority, the central unity of the Godhead has therefore understandably been the starting point for debate about the Trinity. Thomas Aquinas and Augustine stressed the stable, serene unity of the Godhead and only then spoke of the distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within that authority. In the Eastern Orthodox Church however, the preferred way of managing pluriformity has always been through confederation where, in theory at any rate, no one bishop has stood above the others as Christ's vicar but a number of bishops have held this authoritative power together. Here, their doctrine of the Holy Trinity has stressed accordingly the interrelationship of the three separate 'Persons' of the Holy Trinity and only thereafter spoken of the unity of the One as an outcome of the qualities of the separate Persons. We may note however that even then the fear of pluriformity has been so great that Orthodox Trinitarian doctrine has shied away from a true 'confederalional' model towards a subordinationalist model and has spoken of the Son and the Holy Spirit as but the two arms of the initiating Father, allowing for a more authoritarian episcopate to function paternalistically.

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<sup>44</sup> See for example 1 Corinthians 12:12-30.

In today's so-called post-modern world, theologians and church politicians turn again to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as their inspiration (as they have done in The Virginia Report which was submitted to the 1998 Lambeth Conference) and recast it accordingly – perhaps unaware of its revolutionary implications when unfettered from the aforementioned political needs to control. The real difficulty with the use of the doctrine as a model for the Church in a global society is that the unity of the Godhead relies upon the loving and deferential holiness of the three Persons<sup>45</sup> in their relationship one with another, whereas in the world of urban globalization we must also reckon with the demonic powers of greed and original sin infecting the structural dynamics of both the local and global and also the individual persons who play their part within them. Perhaps this is why the sacramental model offered by Professor Christopher Duraisingh<sup>46</sup> offers us a way through the impasse, for he recognises that a totally repentant shift and sacramental belonging are both necessary if the global and local powers are ever together to issue in a just and loving world. Duraisingh speaks of the change that is wrought in Christians through our sacramental belonging to the Body of Christ first through our baptism when our individuality is named and blessed, and then in our sharing of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist when our personal identity is still honoured but now within the wider global and universal communion of the one Body. In both sacraments the three Persons of the Trinity must be named for the action to have 'validity' so that we may then know ourselves to be operating in the image of the social triune God, the One and the Three, as we are sent out as baptised communicants into a fallen global mission field.

But how will this redeemed unity in diversity 'cash out' in our globalized, urban world?

It is very important for all those engaged in Christian action that they should not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by the enormity of the issues of globalization. In the urban scene this can become an awesome temptation issuing in paralysis, for the challenges of urban living have been debilitating enough even before the addition of the complex forces of globalization

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<sup>45</sup> See especially of course the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers.

<sup>46</sup> The Revd Dr Christopher Duraisingh is Otis Charles Professor in Applied Theology at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. He spoke to the Lambeth Conference 1998 on this topic.

intensified the dynamic. I would suggest that an awareness of the Oneness of the Church can helpfully liberate us into action by prompting a deep realisation that holding all together is the Triune God in whom is rooted the local and global, and who offers us such abundant and committed love that we are saved from despair and paralysis. This awareness prompts us to engage in networking, advocacy, parabolic or sacramental action, and discernment. Let me describe each in turn.

### **Networking**

Christian networking allows groups and individuals to relate together around common concerns and issues and to share information, stories, analysis and planning. All this can today be greatly facilitated by the use of modern electronic communication media. It is a way to use the technology of globalization to seize upon its communal benefits without necessarily acceding to its dominant cultural values. Supportive friendships can be struck up and maintained between individuals and groups who gather around liberative action and key issues. In this way the best local action is both co-ordinated and reflected upon across the boundaries of the local so that local and global action can work together. This was clearly necessary at Seattle in the 1999 demonstrations against so-called free international trade and the Jubilee 2000 Coalition has been an inspiration in this regard – enabling a small local English initiative to gather pace and support, to link with like-minded groups across the world, to share theologically and philosophically, to pool resources and plan concerted action. Governments and the World Bank have had to respond and transnational corporations have had to take notice. The populace in many countries have been made aware of alternative economic and social values, and Christian thinking about sin, debt, forgiveness and covenant has been shared.<sup>47</sup>

The Anglican Communion has its own formally recognised networks, including its Family Network, its Justice and Peace Network and most recent of all, the new Anglican Urban Network, which will seek to share across the Communion on all matters relating to the issues of globalization and

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<sup>47</sup> See Laurie Green *Jesus and the Jubilee, The Kingdom of God and Our New Millennium* (Sheffield, New City Special No.11, Urban Theology Unit & Jubilee Coalition, 1997).



urbanization.<sup>48</sup> Networks allow us to act and reflect locally and globally, building coalitions with those of like mind and those who may come at the issue from a very different perspective. They relate, not in any hierarchical manner, but in a responsive openness to relationships and possibilities. They can become an expression of the eucharistic community at its best, not simply working for some intangible benefits 'when the revolution comes' but for achievable goals for the benefit of the urban poor in the here and now. Such is the value and power of networking.

### **Advocacy**

Because networks allow action and reflection at so many levels in an integrated and strategically coordinated manner, those on the Network who find themselves in positions to influence the outcome of events can do so having been well-informed by those others on the network who are experiencing matters from the perspective of the downtrodden. If those in the corridors of power have a direct ear to the voice of the poor, much can be achieved. Regional gatherings and mutual visits inform both the powerful and the downtrodden so that bridges can be built and informed action taken. However, advocacy of this sort has immense dangers, for the corridors of power have a subtle way of controlling those who visit them, issuing in patronising attitudes and complicity with disabling forces. Those who claim to speak for the poor rather than from the poor are in danger of losing the respect of the poor if their listening has been in any way impaired. The leaders of the Church of England have in the past aspired to be just such a voice in the governmental corridors of power and have often antagonised the poor in the process. So again the Church must have repentance as its watch-word, guarding with the power of the dominical sacraments against conformity to the dominant values of global urbanization.

Better still is that form of advocacy which facilitates direct encounter between the poor and the powerful. The Church universal must be a vehicle for the voice of the poor, and advocacy for others must always have as its goal the equitable sharing of power so that all human beings may become the subject of their own history by finding advocates from amongst their own community.

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<sup>48</sup> See the last section of this paper for further details about the establishment of the Anglican Urban Network.

A wonderful example of churches networking together to provide a platform from which the voice of the poor could be heard occurred during the final years of the last century when Church Action on Poverty staged 'Poverty Hearings' across Britain, when the Church brought the powerful and the powerless together in one place and allowed the poor to speak for themselves. It was Advocacy of the best sort.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, in South Korea a number of Anglican students mobilised slum-dwellers during the building clearances in preparation for the Olympic Games. They came together in 'Houses of Sharing' and developed from that into a movement within the churches for the rights of the poor.

### **Sacramental Action**

Just as Networking will enable better advocacy, so global awareness will enable better local sacramental action. Christians who know themselves to be part of the Communion of Saints will be inspired to initiate local action which speaks of issues much greater than themselves, for just as a sacrament participates in that which is beyond its own measure, so small but well-focussed initiatives can bring change and illumination to issues which are local but participate in issues which are beyond themselves in the global inter-relationships and issues of which they are but a symptom. Even a well-designed local 'bring and buy' sale can speak volumes about global sustainability, recycling and waste awareness. An insightful embargo on a local shop can highlight the questions of unjust international trade. A project designed to help individual youngsters in Los Angeles who have entered into the gang culture can alert society to the international dimensions of the drug trade. Symbolic action and committed local campaigns on clean water or better housing can participate in and encourage a 'movement' and strategy at a national or even international level. These actions are sacramental in that they not only enhance the quality of the relationships amongst those who enact them, but they actually impinge upon the external realities – the globalization processes we have been analysing. Each time a 'mustard seed' is planted, the cultural battle might be joined. The best global thinking remains abstract irrelevance if it is not rooted in local action, but local action that is not significant of issues greater than the local will remain supportive of an unjust status quo.

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<sup>49</sup> See for example the report of the London Poverty Hearing 1995, CAP Manchester M1 1JT.

As our Church learns to be more aware of its own Oneness, so it will find its local action ever more ecumenical and discerning of the whole Body of Christ, for whilst experiencing itself as of many parts it will also become ever more mindful of its global power to confront the powers of darkness. Indeed, it will learn its unity in the very context of mission as barriers are broken and solidarity enhanced. As Andrew Davey puts it, 'Ministry becomes a unifying factor when it is orientated towards liberation, and not confined to enclaves of the rich or the maintenance of the institution for its own sake.'<sup>50</sup> It is then that the Church must guard its Holiness.

## **2. The Church must be Holy**

The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church must above all things be God-directed, immersed in the concerns of the world but at all times modelling its life upon God's holiness. The brutal, sinful realities of the urban world in which it is set must not be allowed to capture its vision nor diminish its determination to play its proper, holy part in God's transformation of those processes which work against the common good. In its reflection upon and engagement with the urban world the Church must always be asking where and how Christ is to be found within it and act there with God in ways modelled upon the divine mission. Therefore we must expect the Church to be fractured and broken by its engagement if it is to partake as the Body of Christ in Christ's crucifixion within the urban world. And even amidst that tempting pain, it must never forsake its ethical and essential holiness.

The crucifixion of Christ is to be found constantly in our urbanized world, for the commodification of people and things and the ruthless exploitation of technology and resources which we have analysed as the dominant values of globalized urban capitalism, threaten to enslave both rich and poor alike. They coax the powerful to turn their backs on the downtrodden and leave the poor destitute slaves of competition with no sense of belonging, worth, or even identity. For all its promise, there is a brutality in global urbanization. It promises the poor and the wealthy so much but leaves them bereft of even what they had. The process runs as follows: the poor countries are awash with

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Davey, *An Urban Way of Being Church*, Doctoral Thesis 1999, Sheffield University p.235.

advertisements for and symbols of the benefits of the wealth of the rich developed world and so naturally look to that rich world for aid. The World Bank offers to assist them but only if they will emulate the values and priorities of the rich world. A loan will be offered only if the poor nation reduces its internal food subsidies, reduces spending on health and education and ploughs its meagre resources into engagement in the world market, seeking to earn foreign currency rather than maintaining its own internal local market. But the international market is so designed that a poor country may never be able to succeed within it. The terms of trade and the advantages which the already-wealthy countries have, lead to the poor new players being pushed ever lower down the league of trade; they eventually find that the initial promise of increasing wealth for all proves illusory. The poor country becomes ever more dependent and the vast majority of its population is driven to deeper anguish and worse conditions than even pertained in their previous wretched state. All this is far removed from the holy promise offered by Christ that when God's Reign comes there shall be a banquet prepared for all the nations. The evidence of the streets of Jakarta, Harare or Lima is that the promise offered by globalization is hollow, driving the rich to hardness of heart and the poor to destitution.

We are not arguing here that the values of capitalism are essentially malevolent. Indeed profit motive has proved its worth in providing a fallen world with wealth-creation and the opportunity for a higher economic standard of living, but the ruthless exploitation of those who are at abject disadvantage flies in the face of all that is decent and it is this process which is writ large across the features of global urbanization. When, by the very nature of the process, subjected human beings are systematically denied a share in the benefits of that system and when the beneficiaries are so used to seeing everything and everyone as commodities then the wrath of the Holy God must be mirrored in the actions of the prophets of the Holy Church.

But a Holy Church will not merely do different and alternative things – it must also be different and alternative. It must make an option for the transformation of its very self. As we have noted from the work of Duraisingh, the Church from its baptismal repentance and its eucharistic solidarity with the crucified must offer itself to transformation. Analysis and experience of global urbanization must teach the Church to recognise how for too long it has

legitimised an exploitative status quo by its modelling of subservience to the powerful and obeisance to worldly success. A repentant holy church must step down from its pedestal before it is knocked off it by insightful ridicule. My hope is that those of goodwill within and without the Church will see the crisis and respond together.

Jesus taught that right vision helps elicit repentance and right action, for when asked about how the Reign of God might be inaugurated, in response he told visionary parabolic stories and enacted sacramental signs of transformation. He spoke of the forgiving inclusivity of the Father at the return of his prodigal son. He pointed to the way that loving action can cut across the barriers of race or tribe, in the parable of the Good Samaritan. He warned of the crisis awaiting those who failed to care, in the stories of Dives and Lazarus and the Sheep and the Goats. He indicated a new style of leadership as he rode a donkey into Jerusalem, and a new style of holiness as he threw money-changers from the temple. And whilst each of these, in itself, was such a small mustard seed of an action in the face of the global power of the Roman Empire, nevertheless each was significant of a new culture, a new way of being, a new logic, a new society whose participants were to change the world significantly.<sup>51</sup>

In the same way, there are small groups of globally-networked Christians today acting with this same Reign of God logic, basing their style upon the sacramental, parabolic actions and the stories of witness that we see in the life and ministry of Jesus. But to emulate his method they must take every care when engaged in Christian action to build in opportunity to reflect theologically, politically, economically and culturally so that their actions may inform their thinking and their thinking inform their action. In this way the sacramental nature of the action may become more carefully defined and evident as it seeks to engage both locally and at the same time address global issues and structures of injustice. This is what we can mean by the slogan 'think globally, act locally'. In this way real practical assistance is brought to those close at hand whilst simultaneously there is a participation in the power of God and humanity to change the global processes and cultures of oppression. This is acting according to Reign of God logic and I have sought

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<sup>51</sup> See especially chapter 4, 'Discovering how Parables Operate' in my *Power to the Powerless* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987) p.50-64.

elsewhere to describe the praxis and practicalities of how groups can best function effectively in this way.<sup>52</sup>

The practice of such groups must of course be based in large measure upon how we see Jesus engaging with the local manifestations of the global issues of his day. And this is why our action and reflection will begin by making the same basic option for the poor and outcast that we see him making in his own life and ministry. For in the Gospels the poor are the first subjects of this Good News. The social and economic status of Jesus and his family has been variously argued, but I am convinced that his skills in the construction and building technology of his day would have placed him above the peasantry on a financial scale, and the special circumstances of the family soon after the birth of Jesus would account for the poor person's offering made at the time of his Presentation in the temple. Jesus therefore made a conscious option to work alongside the poor, downtrodden and disaffected, and there is clear evidence that he expected his disciples to follow him in that sacrifice – 'we have given up everything to follow you' (Matthew 19:27). He opens his community to those who by traditional and contemporary standards were considered unclean and of no account and sets them instead at the very centre of his affairs. He takes children and women, the blind, the lepers and the destitute and speaks to their concerns and offers them inclusion. It must indeed be noted that Jesus does not simply afford them dispassionate justice but aggressively positive discrimination. This is clearly evidenced in his parable of the labourers in the vineyard for the logic of a market economy would see no justice in paying the same wage to labourers who have worked varying hours but there is divine justice in sharing equally the benefits of a society which would otherwise treat its members unfairly. The holiness required of a society to be as inclusive and justly distributive as this is of course unlikely, requiring not only an attitudinal change but also the invention of a mechanism to deliver that change. The Christian is asked nevertheless to live 'as if' this were the case and to live in such love and charity with the neighbour that all things become possible. We would hope that the Church at least may aspire to such principles as a sign of the will of God for the world and seek to resemble those aspirations in all ways possible.

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<sup>52</sup> Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology – a pastoral cycle resource book* (London: Mowbray, 1990), and Laurie Green, *Power to the Powerless* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1987).

Our analysis of global urbanization has shown how international structures subject the poor and place women and children in powerless positions today as then, whilst aggrandising and further enriching the wealthy. Although this clearly means that both poor and rich are enslaved by the system, the Christian must make the option for the poor, as Jesus did, in order that all might be saved, and this will demand of the Church courage, vision and self-sacrifice, so that it may live by its own essential mark of his new brand of Holiness.

Lest we be misunderstood, let me say again that because oneness is also a mark of the holy Church, the holistic and systemic perspective this brings allows us to make this option for the poor, knowing that with God the rich can be saved thereby. For the problem of poverty is beyond both the poor and rich alike and the new discipline of global studies is helping us to see this. We are now more able to analyse what the factors are that drive modern exclusion and injustice and this clarifies for us the structural nature of much of our predicament. According to our analysis, our fight is not so much against rich unjust individuals holding onto power and privilege, but against complex global and urban processes which incline and allow them to do so. We can voice the same point by using the words of the New Testament – ‘for our fight is not against flesh and blood but against the powers and principalities of this dark age.’ (Ephesians 6:12). This is why Jesus places the so-called marginalized quite literally at the centre time and time again<sup>53</sup> in order to make it more readily apparent that the cause of the injustice is in the larger dynamics of society, not merely in any one ‘marginalized’ or ‘oppressive’ sector. Whilst not detracting from the responsibility which every human being must carry, we must assert that the global poor are not the cause of their own problems – they are much more sinned against than sinning. Likewise it would be false merely to lay the blame entirely on the rich as if to say that there was never a rich person who did not act sacrificially and insightfully for justice. We are all in this dilemma together and together we must seek for liberation for all creation. Our urban mission must therefore be open to all people of goodwill – but the driving stratagem must be God’s option for the poor. Liberation theology has offered us a penetrating analysis of what salvation can mean in all its fullness but it has never offered an adequately appreciative theology of wealth-creation and its complex challenges, so we are challenged also to address that issue

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53 See for example Luke 6:6-11; John 8:8; Mark 9:36.



aright. And in seeking such a theology we must not be hampered in our creativity by conforming our thinking to the old scarring commodificational values of global capitalism but guided by those of the Reign of God vision. We must investigate not only how we may distribute wealth fairly but how the processes of its production may be fair and just. Our repentant action must thus work for the release of both oppressed and oppressor as inclusively as Our Lord when he bids us pray, 'forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.'

The Church should then adopt Jesus' direct strategy of being alongside the poor asking always who is most benefiting from our actions – ourselves or God's poor through whom he saves the world? Our servanthood alongside, for and as, the poor will result in a Gospel integrity of vulnerability whereby we share with those at risk a deeper appreciation of our need one for another and our dependence upon God's grace. It must be Christ-like in being a servanthood without subservience. The Church moves in a complex situation where there are multiple actors with multiple interests, and a worldly wisdom is called for in seeking to discern just who benefits from any action. Being alongside and living as the poor will also assist us as Church to fight against the Church's greatest temptation, which is to consider ourselves a community of insiders who have all the answers. Being with the poor will remind us to see ourselves for what we really should be – a community with Jesus of 'outsiders'. From this perspective upon the world's issues we will better be able to judge who is being served by any project or community action and where the injustice properly resides. It is a perspective which will also give us the heartache required to engage in courageous Godly action.

The operation of a Holy Church in today's urban setting will often need to be in small, inclusive issue-focused groups or cells which have a prayerful heart and a courageous commitment to act locally. Such cells will gather together at the parish level in the larger eucharistic community of believers for grander worship and community networking, but they will also operate on a much smaller scale where more intimate worship is possible and where considerable networking with other women and men of good-will is more likely since in the small group the latter are less likely to be put off by the institutional culture of the larger gathering. The abiding concern of such groups when engaging in parabolic or sacramental action will be whether or not the group's life is

conforming to that of the man who rode into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. First, they must ask whether or not their action 'rides into Jerusalem' – are they confronting the powers of injustice at the right level as Jesus chose to do? And second, they must be certain that they 'ride on a donkey' – that they come as servant, not concerning themselves too much with themselves and their church agenda. We will certainly need to be a self-sacrificial Church for the new millennium, for to make the Jesus challenge fresh for our time will lead to crucifixion, as ever it did for a Holy Church.

### **3. The Church must be Catholic**

We have indicated already that the conflicting processes of localization and globalization are mirrored by equivalent dynamics in the Church. The local parochial gathering must be jealous of its distinct particularity and identity and at the same time be pleased to acknowledge both its denominational and unified identity shared with others as part of the Church Universal. A strong trinitarian doctrine will own the oneness of the Universal and the differences of the parochial, but for each locally encultured parish to be thus accepting of the next will call for a Christian maturity which is not always readily to be found. Some sections of the Church seem to treat our differences as a design fault in God's creation, whereas for the Church to be catholic it must own the fact that God has created us with exciting differences, and that to good purpose – so that we may learn that truth is not a statement but a relationship. God gives us our differences in order to teach us how to get on one with another – how to hold a mutually enriching conversation and so learn the wisdom of relationship. Holding our beliefs humbly in dialogue gives us the possibility of learning further truth from others rather than remaining the prisoners of our own dogmatic deafness.

One of the great benefits of urban life is that it concentrates so many people into close proximity that these differences become more readily apparent. They are everywhere 'in your face'. The exciting possibilities of exchanging different foods, cultures, music and languages are there for the taking and many urban congregations become bridge-builders, practising their ecumenicity and catholicity to the benefit of communities that are often otherwise fractured by these same differences. Cultural interchange, cross-cultural and multi-faith dialogue is not, of course, exclusive to the urban scene but it is often here that the brutal reality of the differences is most sharply felt.

It is one thing for academics from different faiths to discuss their differences in their senior common room; it is altogether on a more pertinent level to engage these self-same issues at the points of sharp intercultural conflict on the streets of the inner city. And when conflicting groups, multicultural or otherwise, seek to engage openly and respectfully in such places of strife, then the God of all creation is most graciously and evidently present, gifting participants with discernment, charity, and wisdom. This is the very stuff of Catholicity, not the easy agreement over the coffee-cups of academic debate, but charity forged in the furnace of global urbanization.<sup>54</sup>

A truly catholic church will be a bridge-builder for community, for community and not prejudiced exclusivism is the only answer to the easy relativism with which globalization threatens and which is so alien to the Jesus of the Gospels. It is to the Gospel story that a catholic church must constantly refer, for community networking and bridge-building by Christians in the global city will necessarily entail giving attention to the treasures of our own Christian faith traditions and practices. This reference to our shared formative traditions will reinforce the solidarity of belonging amongst Christian members, telling the Christian Story and living intimately together in eucharistic communities. At the same time it will give us the self-confidence to remain open to the possibility of engagement with different others so that our own faith traditions are put to the test to see whether they still carry God's truth adequately. The societal assumptions and opinions of others will also of course be critiqued from the perspective of the traditions which are part of our story as the Christian Church. This mutually enriching dialogue can be Spirit-inspired if always the Christian community offers itself to continued encounter with the God who does not despise difference but creates it.

Such a rich, ecumenical catholicity will help those who live in our global urban world to guard against the sin of turning our back on the 'other'. For the fear of the other is very real in our present day urban lives – be it the fear of those who gate themselves into their wealthy security-guarded ghettos because they fear those on the streets, or whether it is the fear at street level where the poor demonise others and either withdraw into negativity and

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<sup>54</sup> For a critical, prophetic, view on multiculturalism, from the world of planning theory, see: Leonie Sandercock, *Towards Cosmopolis* (Chichester: John Wiley 1998).

apathy or hit out with violent uprising or indiscriminate terror. Dialogue and meeting are the bridge-building gifts of the catholic congregation to these alienated urban communities. Some, understandably, do not have the courageous faith to be thus vulnerably catholic amidst the urban scene. Instead they may retreat into fundamentalism in order to value only the local and particular, but this ploy disallows any open dialogue with the other. Another unreal escape is to treat everything and everybody as a commodity in the global market place thus seeking to bring unity among the differences through enforcing a common method of exchange-relationship whilst not owning the true and intrinsic worth and value of local identity and difference. Only the new dialogical bridge-building of the Reign of God – the vulnerable loving logic of the open Trinity of God – will issue in a mutual ownership of our vulnerable humanity and in a challenging but productive honesty within our globalized urban relationships.

To be catholic has been understood in the past to indicate that the Church is both world-wide and unified in faith, but now in this new globalized frame of reference we must include a third element – dialogue.<sup>55</sup> First, there is the dialogue of *culture*. Before globalization we were apt to describe cultures as confined complexes of place, language and social coding, but no more. Now cultures have been blown apart by rubbing up against other languages, places and social expectations. The globalized city is flooded with myriad cultural styles and any one person or group may be expected to function within and across the boundaries of many. Young people particularly are assailed by so many possibilities and options in the city that the question of their own identity, place and style of belonging becomes a battle ground for faiths and allegiances. Missional enculturation amidst the kaleidoscopic cultures of the global city is now one of the greatest challenges which our incarnational faith has to face. The missionary, unaware of this heady cultural mix, will die the death of irrelevance if they do not welcome inter-cultural catholic dialogue.

The second focus of our catholic dialogue therefore must be that of *identity*, for this complexity of cultures relativises belonging, which is so much of who

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<sup>55</sup> See Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity, Theology Between the Global and the Local* (New York: Orbis, 1997) in which Schreiter prefers to call this dialogue 'communication'. The analysis which follows is modelled largely upon Schreiter's headings.

we are and what we are. In the turmoil of urban cultural symbols, how do I know who I am, and where I belong? Theorists of the post-modern describe this fragmentation very well but then mistake the symptom for its cause. This paper has argued that the forces of global urbanization have produced what postmodernists refuse to acknowledge – the possibility of a new ‘meta-narrative’ – a new over-arching story. I have argued that commodification is that story, introducing the market into all our relationships and transactions. In today’s western city we are born to shop, and in the urban poverty of the developing world people are reduced to economic units in the global market place or are ignored. Education, health, spirituality, family and so much more are all to be judged in the balance sheet of economic worth and financial transaction. Even culture itself becomes part of the heritage industry. So it is that the market and post-modernism become the meta-narratives of a global society and the symbols of many cultures and belongings swirl around in a great kaleidoscope to serve their cause – the cause being the globalization of capital. For while local cultures are thus threatened and fragmented, and individuals and communities lose their sense of identity, the market will out, whilst erstwhile esteemed cultural values and meanings are blurred and muddled, ceasing to offer the securities which once they supplied.

But although the market is able to offer acquisition and efficiency, identity requires answers at a much deeper level. Identity requires shape and meaning, indeed it requires some form of goal at which the proffered efficiency is expected to aim. The Christian faith offers this deeper meaning but alas, much western Christian mission today seems to have ‘bought into’ the superficial meta-narrative of the market place. The competition between church brands, the hawking antics of some missional styles, the promises of success and efficiency of our ‘product’, have all marred our decade of evangelism in some quarters. But a church which espouses catholicity will be much surer of itself than this. It will know its identity in the cross of its Lord and follow St Paul’s lead in preaching not itself but only Christ crucified. To know itself as the servant Body of Christ will put it back into a mission alongside the suffering of this urbanizing world, challenging its meta-narratives and vulnerably engaging in liberative dialogue.

The third element of catholic dialogue must focus upon *social change*. In the global village we are ever more aware of differences and this experience has

relativised the particular to such an extent that it is no longer accepted that one truth statement could ever be thought of as universally applicable. What is true for me is not understood to be necessarily true for you. Old notions of authority no longer pertain. The chaos which lurks only just below the surface in many a city is, among other things, a symptom of a refusal to accept patronising answers from distant hierarchies – rules and regulations are treated lightly. Sometimes the rampant individualism of society is blamed for this breakdown of order, but that individualism is only itself a symptom of the fear that there is no universal meaning or truth. So likewise no longer is a universal theology viable which comes imposed from above upon our experiences. The way forward, it seems to me, is to begin to learn from the New Testament that truth is essentially never a statement but always a relationship, in that God, who is the ultimate truth, is essentially to be known not as a concept but as love – and a relational trinitarian love at that. Contextual theology by definition affirms this relational quality of truth and therefore asserts the provisionality of all doctrinal and theological statements. This is why deep immersion in the context of a globalizing world will help us to understand both the nature of our mission and the nature of God's relational truth.

Having lived in the deep inner city for fifty years of my life, I would however be the last person to suggest that the context of global urbanization is anything less than a harsh background against which to preach and witness to vulnerable relational love. Every urban missionary knows the frightening and threatening reality of working amidst the social breakdown between groups in today's 'glocal' world. Therefore the search is on to find a way in which our exciting contextual theologies can weave together into a pattern of Godly truth which would be supportive of personal and societal integration without the imperial impulse which has dogged mission and theology for so long.

At this juncture Manuel Castells<sup>56</sup> and Peter Beyer<sup>57</sup> helpfully utilise the social philosophical concept of 'global flows'. This term refers to the way in which initiatives deriving from different localities may nevertheless evidence similarities which prove to be mutually intelligible and supporting. Beyer in particular argues that recent theological flows are strongly evident where

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<sup>56</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Informational City* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).

<sup>57</sup> Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: Sage, 1994) pp.96-111.

converging ideas flow together in opposition to the dominant values of modern globalization. So liberation theologies, he suggests, accuse the global economy of failing the poor, just as he believes that feminist theologies uncover globalization's inability to deliver equality and inclusion, whilst ecological theologies unmask the waste and unsustainability of the industrialising growth ethic of our global systems. Similarly Hans Küng senses<sup>58</sup> that a global ethic might be constructable as the world's religions, constituting one of the great shared traditions of wisdom for humankind, issue in religious ethical flows cohering together around notions of justice and the common good. We must be cautious however, for the picture of justice which a global free-trade ethic will espouse will be the traditionally western, dispassionately blindfolded figure with balanced scales in her hand. But from within the urban turmoil, biblical justice will appear critically opposed to that understanding – symbolised as a torrential, dynamic river rolling down from the mountains as an ever-flowing stream crushing all injustice before it in a quite partisan manner (Amos 5:24). We can expect therefore that these cultural oppositional flows will be intense, critical and powerful.

So our biblical and faith traditions enter into dialogue with culture, identity and social change, offering a way of being catholic which is more than simply acknowledging our global universality. Our catholicity will no longer be imposed from the centre – for a homogeneous church is but an illusion – but we will discover our catholicity in the fragments, as they testify in each diverse culture and locality that the Church is incarnated there in mission, to God's glory. So the Church which is incarnationally catholic impinges directly upon the urbanizing context in which we are set whilst allowing our local missional action to be empowered by global thinking. Our catholicity will be acting locally whilst thinking globally.

#### **4. The Church must be Apostolic**

The Church is a movement not a hobby-club. It has a Gospel mandate upon it and it is sent by the Christ who himself was sent as the summation of the Mission of God. But the Church contents itself time and again with its own

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<sup>58</sup> Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (London: OUP, 1998).

petty concerns, its own well-being and its own future — and fails to remain true to its *raison d'être* which is to recognise and adore God and then to enter into that mission in which God is so evidently engaged. Our Lord's style of missional operation was so to act as to entice the powers that be into a dialogue for real change. He deliberately and overtly operated so as to bring the processes of injustice into the open. He engaged with many of the social tensions of his day and whilst suffering alongside the poor under those unjust processes, showed us a way to address them and triumph over them. And he sends us to participate in that same mission as Apostolic witnesses in a world now dominated by the powerful forces of globalization.

The Lambeth Conference of 1988 and the following meetings of the Anglican Consultative Council sought to affirm the breadth of the meaning of apostolic Mission by analysing its elements, calling them the 'five marks of mission'.<sup>59</sup> The fourth of these marks, or better, 'strands', is very instructive for us at this juncture for it specifies that true mission will include the 'transformation of unjust structures of society.' Alongside the third strand, 'to respond to human need by loving service', this strand alerts us to the fact that it is no less than our apostolic calling to learn to analyse the structural nature of society, to understand its working, to draw attention to where those structures in any way mar the image of God in any of God's children and to set about transforming those structures and caring for those who suffer the consequences of them. Clearly only by engagement and analysis can this aspect of mission be accomplished.

Much of the resourcefulness and success of our current mission as a church is spent in the rural areas of the world without a full appreciation of how the rural inter-relates with the urban and suburban. This is the obverse of the problem of urban theologians and national governments often having addressed the urban without attention to the interconnectedness of the rural. Many of our Church structures and our missional modes are based upon a rather myopic view of our rural experience, despite the fact that the economic and cultural thrust of this globalizing world is now targeted largely upon the urban areas

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<sup>59</sup> The five marks of mission are described as being: 1. To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom, 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers, 3. To respond to human need by loving service, 4. To seek to transform the unjust structures of society, 5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.



and thence to the rural. The inherited ministry style in both rural and urban situations has tended thus far to be directed towards the important matters of piety and pastoralia, but at the expense of adequately addressing the issues of structural injustice. Our mission must mean even more than caring for the world's needy ones. In addition it must be about understanding the processes that oppress, enhancing the processes that build up and affirm, and being alongside the poor in all of it, so that they themselves may be the voice that is attended to and through which all may become blessed. Like Jesus the Church must therefore make, in addition to his option for the poor, an option for politics, and the Good News for the Church is that there are already innumerable examples of this happening. Eucharistic communities around the world are prompted by their worship and growing openness to God and God's mission to be alongside the poor, engaging in local caring and prophetic action and informing the wider Church so that concerted efforts may lever upon the structures of injustice. In my own country, the United Kingdom, we have recently seen the emergence of a new readiness on the part of national government to enter into dialogue with Christian groups and other faith communities to address the questions of social exclusion and urban regeneration. All around the world we see exciting examples of Christians addressing the needs of suffering people whilst at the same time confronting the causes of that suffering.

When the Church seeks to be truly Apostolic it must drive forward, looking to the front and at the same time looking behind so that it knows where it has come from and to whom it belongs whilst simultaneously venturing out into the risk of the future. As the Church enters into catholic dialogue with others, and builds bridges in shattered urban communities, it does not come empty-handed to that dialogue. For whilst respecting the 'other', the Church catholic must have respect for its own provenance. We are moulded by and carry the story which in turn we seek to make fresh in each generation, and to this heritage we must be true. For one of the demonic effects of globalization is that it seeks to make us forget who we are and see ourselves only as transactional commodities in the present global market. But the eucharistic community is of its very nature a community which remembers. As it gathers to give thanks for the sacramentality of all creation, so it re-enacts, rereads, rehearses, and is true to its Lord who says again, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' So it is that the whole future is opened up for us. This is not to say that

we must as Christians always expect God to repeat God's actions from the past – that would be merely to think ideologically – but we can expect the nature of God to be unchanging and so interpret the world and shape our actions accordingly. These traditions of Christian faith we therefore bring proudly to the dialogue as apostolic witnesses and against them we judge the values which surround us. In our mission and proclamation there will therefore be judgement and critique – and the poor will not think kindly of us if we deny who we are and fail to offer ourselves honestly and intentionally as Christian believers.

The apostle on the road has therefore to be glancing in her rear-view mirror as she gauges the forward thrust and direction of the journey. She must look behind to check our traditions in the biblical stories, saintly history and liturgical memories, but not become so intent on what lies behind as to become stuck in reverse gear. We have already warned against the dangers of fundamentalism and regression in Christian believing but we must also guard against the naive primitivism which holds up a particular style or period of the past as a golden age for the Church and seeks to model the present on that illusion of the past. We must instead glory in the fact that in every age Christians have had to struggle and wrestle with complex dynamics, succeeding and failing, but always seeking to hold fast to their Lord's mandate of incarnate love. The apostle must know that our history is important and God's involvement with it has always been intimate. The prophet Jeremiah offers us a deep insight into the way God is with us in the politics and history of each moment. He appears in public with a symbolic yoke across his shoulders – it represents the realities of historic forces. We must get real, says Jeremiah, acknowledging the reality of the social, economic and political processes in which we mission (Jeremiah 28). The false prophet Hananiah could not cope with such political realism in religion and broke Jeremiah's yoke and proclaimed that God would not be constrained by the present historical struggles but would transcend them and act just as God had done in the past when Isaiah prophesied that the people of Israel would be saved from opposing military force. What Hananiah was failing to accept was that the context was now so different from the time of the prophecy of Isaiah. Jeremiah therefore returned with an even stronger yoke upon his shoulders so demonstrating to his contemporaries, as to us, that if the contingent historical realities are not fully addressed then we will be retreating from engagement with the God who gets real. The apostolic Church must learn from these traditions that even in the

reality of its present urban mission in this globalizing world God is indeed at work. It must engage expectantly, knowing that it will meet God in its urban networking and knowing that God is there suffering in the huddled groups scavenging a living on the rubbish tips of the new mega-cities. Hananiah could not step outside of his need to use religious traditions as a confining ideology to suit his own purposes and escape these harsh realities – whereas Jeremiah knew how to honour tradition as a living challenging dynamic, so honouring too the fact that God does new things for new historical circumstances.

We therefore require wise discernment when we delve into our traditions and seek to make appropriate connections with our present situations, for inappropriate ideological usage will lead to misdirected consequential action. To this end we must take note that the biblical traditions which carry much of our Gospel story have themselves been interpreted by many generations in a thoroughly imperialistic manner which scholars are only now beginning to perceive.<sup>60</sup> We must therefore bring our learning and increased sensitisation to the imperialist processes of today's global urbanizing world so that our scholarship helps us unearth the foundational Gospel from its later interpretative accretions. So our apostolic endeavours and experience will inform both our biblical hermeneutics and our missiology.

Walter Brueggemann is helpful in this regard by entitling his book *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in the Biblical Faith*<sup>61</sup> thereby making it clear that the same striking biblical symbol, such as 'the Land', can often carry multiple meanings. He shows from the biblical tradition that God helps us understand who we are and affirms our human identity by taking us from undefined or coerced 'space' and locating us into treasured and trusted 'place'. He recalls the biblical tradition in which God's promise to a recently enslaved Hebrew tribe wandering in the desert of the Sinai, is confirmed when they inherit a place, a land, to call their own. This Promised Land thus becomes a signifier of an historical process of liberation rather than standing as an emblem of a victor's power over other weakening tribes and races – even

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<sup>60</sup> See for example the collection of essays entitled, *The Postcolonial Bible* R.S.Sugirtharajah (ed.) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

<sup>61</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in the Biblical Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977).

though that imperialist reading can be seen in the canonical text. Those with whom we now work in our urban mission are often the miss-placed ones – those who have had their sense of place threatened or have even been forcefully removed from their homes. The built environment around them has often been changed without reference to their feelings or to the soul of their now decimated community. While the poor are driven to locate in vulnerable urban shanties, identical shopping malls and office blocks appear all around the world depriving even the city dwellers of the North of the corporate memory which had heretofore helped them know who they are and where they belonged.<sup>62</sup> The biblical tradition gives us many insights into what the Land can mean for us and how easy it is for the victor to obliterate memories of a real oppression. Nor must we forget that the biblical tradition has led to a continuing awareness of the importance of locality for human identity and belonging. It was this biblical insight which led the theologian Thomas Aquinas to write at length about the theories and practicalities of city planning<sup>63</sup> and it is our responsibility to follow suit by playing our missional part in the critique of modern urban development and regeneration, and to value the full meaning of the land and human space.

As an apostolic, remembering church we will look back into our traditions so that we retain a sense of who we are and to whom we belong. But we will do this so that we may sense God's plan for the future and play our part in its attainment, celebrating the promise and its fulfilment. We must revel in the good times – advertising the good experiences of urban living and reminding our colleagues of those times when God has been very evidently in our midst. Our urban mission must, in addition to our criticisms, celebrate community with street festivals and parties, publish histories and pictures of the magnificence and inspiring complexity of the urban project, and celebrate in bold liturgical worship the vibrancy of urban living. We must tell of the many times God is to be met in the solidarity and in the anguish of urban community life. We must be true to our church's *raison d'être*, seeing and praising God in every facet of our urbanized experience, and working with God, that God's will may be done here on earth as it is in heaven.

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<sup>62</sup> Compare the fascinating unpublished inaugural paper by Prof. Timothy Gorrington on the *Theology of the City of Exeter* 1998.

<sup>63</sup> Aquinas, *Political Writings*: 'On Princely Government' Ch. 13.

So it is that in our inherited credal traditions about the Church as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, the Christian community has at its disposal helpful signs of how it can live as the Body of Christ in the new reality of a globalizing urban world. By thoughtful and prayerful consideration of those traditions the Church can begin to take on the new repentant *metanoia* mind-set for the sort of incarnational community action which our gospel faith requires.

#### IV. THE CHURCH IN ACTION

Such incarnational action by the Church will entice reflection upon our globalising society so that Gospel values may begin to permeate the dialogue. For cities symbolise human assumptions and prevailing cultural values, and our present study of urban processes has shown us how contemporary dominant values subject the poor and leave the rich dangerously exposed morally. We must therefore engage together in this cultural battle in order to create the political will in governments and civil society to see significant change in policy and practice. We will not be satisfied until the poor are treated no longer as passive recipients of neglect; we will want to see the eradication of the commodification of persons and values; we will hope to see people strive after Wisdom rather than the simplistic accumulation of information; we will want to hear respectful, listening conversation rather than be bamboozled by glossy but superficial communication. We want globalization to issue in the emergence of a world-wide Community, whereas the present prevailing values allow globalization to give this impression and the reality of the relationship is that it allows the rich to eat the bread of the poor. Or as Galbraith has so eloquently stated it: 'Does Globalization exist or has it been invented to allow the politics of economic entry into other countries?'

The Church has valuable first-hand experience of the urban and global, together with a vast theological wisdom based on its experience of God being with us in our enterprise. From this base it can offer its critique to entice others into the critical dialogue to effect change. It will be able to remind governments that cities are cultural hybrids made up of smaller competing

units and free agents who do not bow easily to manipulation. Any grand design from above will therefore not issue in the urban utopias so often promised by unwitting governments. Neither must the Church allow planners to assume that there is an attainable urban harmony, for that is to evade the crucial issue of human and economic power processes. Likewise, the Church must ask governments and social-work practitioners if 'capacity building' policies always issue in empowerment for the needy, when we know from long years of experience of adult Christian education in urban ministry that it can in fact simply issue in the flight of the able from the urban scene.

There will be many more examples of speaking such prophetic words of critique in dialogue, but as we saw above, this must be accompanied by bridge-building and creative action. It is exciting therefore to sense the presence of significant changes of heart and perception in important places, and we must seek to discern if these moves are of the Holy Spirit, and if so, join them in collaborative action. I would suggest that the two most significant shifts are to be seen in the United Nations and in the movements of non-governmental organisations which have surrounded the recent meetings of the heads of the wealthy nations. At least at these two levels we must build bridges and engage.

First, in 1996 the immensely important meeting of the UN *Habitat* programme took place in Istanbul, known as the *City Summit*. From this meeting of one hundred and seventy-one nations emerged the *Habitat Agenda* which sets out clear goals for how our cities can become all that we hope for. The Istanbul meeting left the organisation in substantial debt and what with international rivalry and internal power struggles, the Habitat Agenda nearly came to nothing. However, the UN Secretary-General took decisive action which has resulted in Habitat becoming the UN global agency for Cities and Human Settlements, with a clear focus on the attainment of sustainable urban development and the reduction of urban poverty. It is becoming a centre of excellence for disseminating good policy and practice in urban development, governance and management and is forming closer links with local governments and civil society. In August 2000, a small Anglican delegation met key players at the UN in New York to discuss how our Church could be involved in this programme, and we were overwhelmed by the openness and

enthusiasm with which the UN met our overtures. In June 2001 the important *Istanbul+5* meeting will take place to assess the performance of countries five years on from that significant urban gathering, and to move the whole process on.<sup>64</sup> The Anglican Communion has been asked to be there!

But not only must we build bridges with those in power, for we have a Gospel mandate to remain shoulder to shoulder with the poor. But how can we do both simultaneously? It would seem that the World-Wide-Web, one of the potent symbols of globalisation, is spawning a movement in its own image, a movement which the poor are learning to utilise. Thousands of disparate groups are networking through the Web in order better to understand the processes at work and to engage with those who seek to control global capital. The groups have no hub, but the vision is in the spokes of the wheel which is increasingly gathering momentum. More than thirty thousand affinity groups are networking in this way and are visible from time to time surrounding the gatherings of the Global Players, such as the G7/8, the World Bank and the IMF. Rather than Global Players these groups prefer to call themselves 'Local Heroes' – self-appointed representatives of an alternative to globalisation. But these groups are just beginning to identify themselves more formally and the question remains whether they will find a central ideology around which to cohere or become chaotic and anarchistic. The dangers are so obvious, and the potential tremendous. The Churches, again, must be in that dialogue, seeking to win hearts and minds. However, it can only do this, just as it can only rightly influence Global Players, if it is firmly rooted with the poor in the urban settlements. It must itself become a 'Local Hero', patterning itself on the praxis of Jesus.

It is impossible to over-emphasise how swiftly the urban, global scene is now moving. Already the new head of Coca-Cola, the Australian Douglas Daft, has proclaimed that his corporation is becoming 'post-global'. He has determined that they will be 'expanding from global to local' by building relationships with local suppliers, bottlers, transporters and customers. It is a central directive down to the local, that all branches should become part of the local context and environment – 'not because it's "politically correct"... but because the very nature of our business requires that kind of diverse insight and

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<sup>64</sup> Details of Habitat and Istanbul +5 can be found on: <http://www.unchs.org/>

perspective to really flourish.’ Likewise, Paul Hirst writing in the *New Statesman*,<sup>65</sup> argues that the United Kingdom, the most globalised economy in the world (reliant on external markets and manufacturing, with outward investment and internal foreign owners) is now over-exposed. Its globalisation has led to the risk of its investments being in overseas vulnerable markets, a relatively low-level of investment in UK manufacturing, and the control of its firms now residing in foreign hands. Hirst’s concern is then that the UK is too globalized for its own good!

Politicians are moving on too. The British government, strongly influenced by the faith-inspired Jubilee 2000 Coalition, has published a policy paper entitled making *Globalisation Work for the World’s Poor*<sup>66</sup> calling for international trade reform to give more power to poor nations, and for the reform of the Bretton Woods organisations such as the World Bank and IMF. Already the latter have agreed, in 1999, that their interventions should from now on be focused around poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) drawn up by the government of the country concerned in consultation with its civil society. What a revolutionary change that is! And the Church must be there actively engaging at all these levels.

## V. AN ANGLICAN PROGRAMME

Around the world many lay and ordained people work wonderfully together in sacrificial, inclusive action which addresses these complex issues of urban globalization at all levels. Journals, conferences, worship, workshops, gatherings, the internet and word-of-mouth, tell us thousands of stories about women, men and children fulfilling their apostolic calling, and uniting with God’s mission in our urbanizing world.

The Lambeth Conference of 1998 resolved to assist these exciting endeavours by establishing an international Anglican Network for those who are engaged

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<sup>65</sup> *Why Britain is too far ahead*, in *New Statesman*, 18th Sept 2000.

<sup>66</sup> Available on <http://www.dfid.gov.uk> A collection of responses to this paper will be published by the Church of England’s Board for Social Responsibility: Charles Reed (ed.) *Development Matters* (London: Church House Publishing 2001).



in addressing the issues of urban globalization and this Conference resolution was unanimously endorsed by the subsequent meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council at Dundee, Scotland the following year.<sup>67</sup> This Anglican Network will be facilitated by a programme of study and urban mission research through engagement across the continents, in the hope that the profile of these issues will be heightened throughout the Anglican Communion. The intention is that such a programme will provide significant support for those who are already substantially involved in these issues, both as researchers and as practitioners, by bringing them together in an action/research mode. Their work will, we trust, inspire the Anglican Communion as a whole through its next Lambeth Conference to redirect resources in response to new insights and learning. Andrew Davey, the Secretary of the Urban Bishops' Panel, is drafting a primer on globalized urban process and theological practice to be published by SPCK in 2001 entitled *Resources for an Urban Future*, and this work will we hope inform the ongoing work of action/reflection.

Most of all we will be praying for the gift of God's grace to effect *metanoia* in the minds and hearts of God's people so that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church may be gifted and liberated to discern the inter-related processes of urbanization and globalization which affect the new mission landscape and, alongside others of good will, energised to tackle the issues which these processes spawn.

So it is that the Anglican Communion is being challenged to make a decisive shift towards enabling and supporting urban mission and ministry in this new globalizing world. If it does not rise to this challenge the Communion will have misjudged the global challenges facing the Church as it stands on the threshold of the third Christian millennium. This shift can only be achieved if the changes in our global context are acknowledged and the spiritual and material resources are found to discern the challenge we face and the responses that we are called to make. This paper is offered as a contribution to these endeavours.

+Laurie Green, December 2000

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<sup>67</sup> See Appendix.

## **APPENDIX**

### **The Lambeth Conference Resolution II.7, on Urbanization reads:**

This conference:

- a) calls upon the member Churches of the Anglican Communion to address the processes of urbanization across the world, both in our cities and all other communities;
- b) asks our Member Churches to give urgent attention to 'Living and Proclaiming the Good News' in our cities so that all that destroys our full humanity is being challenged, the socially excluded are being welcomed and the poor are hearing the Good News (Matthew 11.3); and in order to assist this priority in mission
- c) resolves
  - i) to ask the Anglican Consultative Council to give support to the formation of an Anglican Urban Network to share information and experience on urbanization and urban mission;
  - ii) to support the establishment of a 'Faith in an Urban World' Commission, after due consultation with ecumenical bodies.

### **Resolution 29 of the eleventh meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council reads:**

- ACC 11 (a) thanks the groups and individuals who have worked so far on these significant issues and encourages them to work together to bring these issues before the churches of the Anglican Communion;
- (b) encourages those who are creating an Urban Network to continue to work towards being recognised in due course as an official Network of the Anglican Communion, and recommends that they are in touch with the Secretary General to discover the Guidelines by which networks are recognised;
- (c) welcomes the proposals of a project to identify and develop urban resources in the Anglican Communion;
- (d) asks the Urban Network to prepare a further report for ACC-12 regarding the scope and viability of a 'Faith in an Urban World' Commission.

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## THE ANGLICAN URBAN NETWORK

**The Anglican Urban Network** described in this booklet is in the process of formation. A core network will be nominated by the provinces of the Anglican Communion during 2001. This will be complemented by a wider community of interest.

Please use this form to make a donation or join the mailing list. (We ask that respondents from North America, Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand contribute at least £20 sterling if they wish to be on the mailing list.) You may wish to describe your situation and interests on the reverse of the form.

Cheques, in US\$ or sterling, should be payable to the *Anglican Consultative Council*.

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The Revd. Dr. Andrew Davey, Anglican Urban Network, Board for Social Responsibility, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ, UK.



**The Urban Bishops' Panel** is a sub-committee of the Church of England's House of Bishops. The Panel acts as a point of reference for concerns and policies affecting urban communities and congregations, by drawing on members' experience as bishops in urban areas and their engagement in diocesan and regional strategies. The Panel is committed to promoting the priority of urban mission and ministry within the Church of England and Anglican Communion. Among its aims the Panel seeks to: stimulate theological reflection and dialogue on urban life and faith; achieve a better understanding of and influence the processes and policies shaping urban communities and congregations; and promote dialogue with government and other decision-makers on matters of concern. The Panel is chaired by the Bishop of Leicester, The Rt. Revd. Tim Stevens.

Secretary: The Revd. Dr. Andrew Davey, Board for Social Responsibility, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ UK. Email: [andrew.davey@c-of-e.org.uk](mailto:andrew.davey@c-of-e.org.uk)

**The Anglican Urban Network** described in this booklet is in the process of formation. A core network will be nominated by the provinces of the Anglican Communion. This will be complemented by a wider community of interest. Please use the form in this booklet to make a donation or join the mailing list.

**The Urban Theology Unit** is an ecumenical centre which seeks to develop new insights of theology derived from the life of the city; create a community of clergy and laity concerned to discover relevant forms of ministry and action in urban areas; and help people discover their vocation in relation to Gospel calls. The Unit offers courses in ministry, and contextual theology at postgraduate level, as well as courses and consultations on theology and urban mission. This booklet is part of the *New City Special* series. Administrator: Janet Ayres, UTU, 210 Abbeyfield Road, Sheffield, S4 7AZ UK.  
Email: [office@utu-sheffield.demon.co.uk](mailto:office@utu-sheffield.demon.co.uk)

Further copies of this booklet are available from the Urban Bishops' Panel or The Urban Theology Unit, addresses above.

*The Impact of the Global – An Urban Theology* describes the changes affecting cities throughout the world. After exploring how urbanization and globalization are shaping the urban communities in which we live, Bishop Green goes on to look at the challenges facing the Church and the way we live our faith in the twenty-first century.

The powerful forces of international capital are coupling with new communication technologies to create a smaller world, in which it becomes ever more evident how control is kept in the hands of the rich through the 'world cities', at the expense of the teeming millions who inhabit the poor and ever-expanding cities of the so-called 'developing world'.

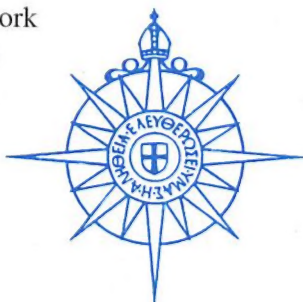
Christians have a wealth of theological resources which may help us to understand the dynamics of what is happening and what we can do, even at the local parish level, to address these seemingly overwhelming global processes.

*The Impact of the Global – An Urban Theology* looks forward to new ways of connecting locally and globally among those who make up our urban communities and congregations, and provides a thought-provoking resource for the new international Anglican Urban Network.

**Laurie Green** is Bishop of Bradwell, in the Chelmsford Diocese of the Church of England. He is well-known as a theological writer on issues concerning urban mission and social justice. His recent booklets include: *The Challenge of the Estates: Strategies and Theology for Housing Estates Ministry* and *Jesus and the Jubilee - The Kingdom of God and our New Millennium* (for details contact: [lauriegr@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:lauriegr@globalnet.co.uk)). His books include: *Let's Do Theology* (Mowbray) and *Power to the Powerless* (Marshalls).

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The Urban Bishops' Panel  
The Urban Theology Unit

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